DERWENT PRIORY;

OR,

MEMOIRS OF AN ORPHAN.

VOL. I.

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MEMOIRS OF AN ORPHAN.

OR,

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

MEMOIRS OF AN ORPHAN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE CASTLE ON THE ROCK."

VOL. I.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR H. D. SYMONDS, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1798.

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OR,

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IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

FIRST PUBLISHED PERIODICALLY; NOW REPUBLISHED, WITH ADDITIONS.

Sir Herbert ——— Surrey

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE CASTLE ON THE ROCK."

March 25th ——— 1800

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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INTRODUCTION.

IF the following pages, submitted with diffidence to the protection of an impartial public, should happily escape the ordeal of criticism, or the sneers of contempt, the Authoress will think her first attempt crowned with all the success it merits. In this humble effort, the truffs alone will accuse her of inciting to error the young and unwary; and, to such readers, she begs leave to observe, that books of entertainment should only be read at times when the mind requires relaxation from more important occupations.

INTRODUCTION.

IF the following pages, ſubmitted with diffidence to the protection of an impartial public, ſhould happily eſcape the ordeal of criticiſm, or the ſneers of contempt, the Authoreſs will think her firſt attempt crowned with all the ſucceſs it merits. In this humble effort, ſhe truſts none will accuſe her of inciting to error the young and unwary; and, to ſuch readers, ſhe begs leave to obſerve, that books of entertainment ſhould only be read at times when the mind requires relaxation from more important occupa-

tions. They should not steal one hour from domestic duties, nor force one sigh from the anxious bosom of a parent.

To those parents likewise, who wage eternal war with Novels, may it not be suggested, that they frequently, under the mask of fiction, convey improvement to the minds of those, who perhaps, either through inattention or indolence, would not seek it in less flowery fields? And here, the writer of these small Volumes, begs leave to observe, that she does not mean to insinuate, that her pages are replete either with instruction or entertainment; but she trusts, if there is but

little to improve, there is, at least, nothing to corrupt the heart. Nor does she presume, in this short address, to enter into a vindication of Novels; since she is well convinced, that notwithstanding all which may be urged in their favour, it is a subject on which there will ever remain great diversity of opinion.

Should this trifle, in its course, pluck, but for a moment, the dart of care from the bosom of sensibility, or steal a single hour from pain, in the chamber of sickness; the Authoress will think she has not written in vain. Should it be received with favour, it will awaken her gratitude; if rejected with

with disdain, it will scarcely affect her repose: for, having been through the greater part of her life, inured to the pressures of disappointment, she has at length learned the best lesson they can convey to the heart—that of bearing them without repining.

DERWENT PRIORY.

LETTER I.

Lady Laura Merioneth to Miſs Lumly.

Twickenham, May 9, 179—

YOUR letter, my dearest girl, is juſt arrived, and has relieved me from a load of anxiety on your account; for I was very ingeniouſly, at the moment I received it, tormenting myſelf, by a retroſpect of every ill that could poſſibly attend you, in a journey of two hundred miles. You are ſafe; and I

am as happy as I can be, after ſuſtaining the loſs of your ſociety. But I muſt endeavour to ſilence my regrets on this occaſion; for as the mandate of a parent ſummoned you from me, I ſhould be reproaching his authority if I ventured to complain of it.

I have the ſatisfaction to inform you, that my aunt's health is much improved, ſince our return to this ſweet retirement. London never agrees with her; and yet ſhe was yeſterday almoſt inclined to take wing again for it. You will certainly wonder what magnet could be ſufficiently powerful to attract her again to that region of ſmoke, confuſion, and noiſe, at this advanced ſeaſon of the year. Know, then, by way of preface to my ſubject, that Mrs. Maynard yeſterday paſſed the morning with us; ſhe came pur-

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purpoſely to inform us that Lord and Lady Derwent, and family, were at this time on a viſit at her houſe in London; and preſſed Mrs. Merioneth and myſelf to come and join the party, in order to effect a family reconciliation. My aunt, good creature! whoſe heart beats in uniſon to every pulſe of ſociability, was for returning with Mrs. Maynard, and very ſeriouſly hoped I would accompany her. I objected, on the ground that ſuch a viſit might not be agreeable to them. Mr. Maynard was authoriſed to aſſure me, that they were impatient to receive us. My aunt again preſſed my compliance.

I heſitated.

Why (ſaid Mrs. Maynard) does Lady Laura oppoſe the wiſhes of her friends?

Becauſe (ſaid I) I feel a little hereditary diſlike to the preſent Earl.

I muſt own (ſaid my aunt, a little peeviſhly) I expected a better reaſon for your oppoſition.

My dear madam, my declining Mrs. Maynard's polite invitation, does not in the leaſt interfere with your acceptance of it,—was my anſwer.

I certainly ſhall not go alone, replied Mrs. Merioneth; and what can be your ſerious objections to viſiting the only relations, except myſelf, that fate has left you?

My dear aunt, you muſt recollect frequently hearing me expreſs my diſlike to the character of the preſent earl,—founded, I muſt own, principally on his unfeeling behaviour at the death of my brother.—A loſs ſo fatal

fatal to the peace, ſo deſtructive to the health, of my lamented father, ſhould have been treated with more reſpect by his next heir.

My deareſt Laura (ſaid my aunt) where is the man who would not exult in the demiſe of a ſickly heir, who ſtood between him a title and fortune?

It is very true (ſaid I) that there may be others who would have exulted equally under the ſame circumſtances: but perhaps they would have had the decency to have kept their joy to themſelves.

Come, come (cried Mrs. Maynard) you think too ſeriouſly of paſt events; —let me ſtate the caſe. The late earl loſt a puny heir; the preſent earl ridiculed his brother's exceſſive grief on that occaſion, and ſaid he might marry

again, and have another ſon:—ſome buſy officious tale-bearer reported the converſation,—your father reſented it,—it created a coldneſs which ended in diſguſt,—and I am informed it is near twelve years ſince you have met:—and this, you muſt confeſs, is the moſt that can be ſaid of a circumſtance which has ſo long divided ſuch near relations. Do throw aſide your objections, and let me have the pleaſure of reſtoring you to friends who will be charmed with your ſociety. However, if you ſtill decline viſiting them at my houſe, you ſurely can have no objection to their viſiting you at Twickenham.

None in the leaſt, ſaid I; and I think, as the offence originated with Lord Derwent, he owes us that compliment.

Mrs. Maynard agreed to bring the ladies one morning this week. She could not anſwer for the earl, who pays conſtant attendance to the duties of parliament. Thus ſtands the matter at preſent; and I will not cloſe this letter till I ſee if Mrs. Maynard makes good her promiſe.

Our expected gueſts arrived yeſterday, and ſpent the day with us. The party conſiſted of Lord and Lady Derwent, their ſon and daughter, Mrs. Maynard, and a Miſs Rutland, a young lady under the protection of Lady Derwent. After the tireſome ceremony of formal introductions was over, we all appeared equally determined to be pleaſed with each other. Even the earl, though I plainly perceived, with ſome difficulty, diſencumbered himſelf

from his usual weight of dignity, and condescended to be agreeable. Lady Derwent is a most pleasing woman:—Lord Merioneth resembles the youthful portrait of my honoured father; and I already feel for him the affection of a sister. But how shall I find words which may do justice to the beauty, elegance, and dignity of Ellen Rutland? It is impossible to describe her; you must see her, before you can form any estimate of her numberless attractions.

Mrs. Maynard whispered me, in confidence, that she thought Lord Merioneth was attached to Miss Rutland.

I honour his taste—was my reply.

He does no credit to his understanding by the selection, said Mrs. Maynard; for I believe Miss Rutland is a de-

a dependent on his mother's bounty, without family or fortune, and it is not reasonable to think the Earl, with his knowledge of the world, will ever consent to so strange an alliance.

It would raise him (said I) much in my estimation, if he consented with a good grace to the happiness of his son.

Oh! you are such a romantic creature (cried she) that we must not consult your judgment in matters of this kind: but I think Lord Merioneth, who is without doubt, a young man of great understanding, can never entertain serious thoughts of uniting his fate with so obscure a partner.

Before I could answer, the lady in question joined us, followed by Lord Merioneth.

May one know (said Mrs. Maynard, archly)

archly) what ſubject you were debating on, as you came up the walk? (I ſhould have obſerved we were in the garden.) Miſs Rutland bluſhed.—Lord Merioneth anſwered, I was endeavouring to convince Miſs Rutland, that this view, beautiful as it is, is nothing to the ſcenery of Italy.—Here is not that wild romantic diverſity which characteriſes the landſcapes of that country. But here (ſaid he) bowing gallantly, I muſt drop my alluſions; for in the preſence of the Graces, even Siberia's deſerts would become a paradiſe.

Go, you are a trifler (ſaid Mrs. Maynard, laughing) though, I muſt confeſs, an agreeable one, and flatter with a very good grace.—Does he not, Miſs Rutland?

Why I really think (ſhe anſwered) as

as far as I can judge, that his lordſhip's late reſidence in Italy has much improved him in that ſcience.

Oh! (cried he) you miſtake the matter entirely, my charming Rutland: it is the ſubject which is improved—bowing to her.

She bluſhed exceſſively.

Mrs. Maynard exclaimed, I really think, my lord, you would make love in a very pretty manner.—What do you think, Miſs Rutland?

I—I do not know, Madam—heſitatingly.

Oh! his Lordſhip has not tried his abilities then, in your hearing.

In pity to Miſs Rutland's confuſion, I exclaimed—You are too curious, Mrs. Maynard: and if I were Miſs Rutland, I would adviſe Lord Merioneth to try his abilities in your hearing, for

the

the pleasure of having your opinion of them.

Excellent! (exclaimed Merioneth) I am quite at Mrs. Maynard's service; and if she can make room for me in her list of admirers, I will (addressing himself to her) pick up your fan, fetch your snuff-box, summon your Abigail, caress your lap-dog, and improve your parrot.

Oh, hold, for heaven's sake! (cried the lady); you would indeed be an acquisition to any one that could make room for you; but, in my list, there is no vacancy. You can practise, you know, this summer at the Priory (looking archly at Ellen) and, perhaps, another season I may admit you in my train.

Most superlatively kind, and amazingly condescending! cried lord Merioneth,

rioneth, dryly;—at the ſame time he drew Mrs. Maynard's hand under his arm, and made for the houſe.

We followed; the day paſſed very pleaſantly, and it was late before they departed for London.—Lord Derwent gave us a preſſing invitation to paſs the ſummer at the Priory; and I am inclined to think we ſhall accept of it, as my aunt is very partial to her native place. We have never reſided there ſince the death of my mother. I ſhall be much pleaſed, I am ſure, with the venerable old pile. In it I drew my firſt breath. It will likewiſe have an additional charm,—it will place me many miles nearer Lumly Houſe than I am at preſent.—I am interrupted——

Lord Merioneth was below,—came to propoſe our accompanying them to the

the Priory the week after next. It was agreed on; ſo you will receive no more letters from Twickenham, as we have but little time for the neceſſary preparations: but as ſoon as we have completed our journey, I will re-aſſume my occupation. Don't expect a packet a week, or imagine that I ſhall excuſe you from anſwering my letters.

Mrs. Merioneth joins with me in love and compliments; and we ſincerely hope, before this reaches you, that Mr. Lumly will be reſtored to convaleſcence. I rejoice in your brother's improvement, but would have you beware of his tutor's attractions. That heart of thine, which withſtood all the ſighing ſwains of the gay world, may be more alive to the merits of Danville. I forget whether you ſaid he was handſome; but I take it for grant-

ed that he is young and agreeable,—two very dangerous qualifications to oppose against the heart of a generous and unsuspecting woman.

Farewel! I have quieted my conscience by telling you your danger.

Your's sincerely, &c.

L. MERIONET.

LETTER

LETTER II.

Lady Laura Merioneth to Miss Lumly.

The Priory, July 7, 179—.

AND now, my dear Jane, having in some degree recovered the fatigue of my journey, and silenced by reflection those painful perturbations, which I could not fail to feel on my entrance into this venerable mansion; for it was here I passed the happy years of infancy, and experienced all the solicitudes of maternal affection, and it was here my fainted mother died, in giving birth to a long-desired heir.—Alas! my dear Jane, how frequently may we observe that those things which we most fervently desire, as the greatest of

all

all poſſible bleſſings, are too frequently attended with the ſevereſt diſappointments; it ſeems as if Providence, even by the indulgence of our deſires, was teaching us leſſons of reſignation and humility.—But I am running into a ſubject I did not intend to enter on; and as you deſire my correſpondence may be regular and minute, I take it for granted that you expect a ſketch of our journey. I will therefore endeavour not to diſappoint you.

Know then, that our party conſiſted of Lady Derwent, Miſs Rutland, Julia, Mrs. Merioneth, Mrs. Maynard, and your friend, attended of courſe by our Abigails, and eſcorted by Lord Merioneth. The Earl ſtaid in London, and is not expected here for ſome time. We travelled in our own carriages, with poſt-horſes; Lord Derwent's

coach, my aunt's chariot, and Mrs. Maynard's chaise, I believe, concluded the cavalcade. Lord Merioneth, indeed, had a ſuperb phaeton, but the height of it prevented his gaining one companion; ſo he reſigned it to the ſervants, and took a ſeat with me and Mrs. Merioneth in our chariot.—We had a very pleaſant journey through a beautiful country, ſlept one night on the road, and reached this place the following evening.

A meſſenger had been diſpatched to announce our coming, and the good old ſervant was rejoiced to ſee Mrs. Merioneth of the party.

Ah, Madam! (cried the ſteward, as he aſſiſted her in alighting) this is an honour I never expected to have again.

My aunt tried to ſpeak, but could not articulate a word.

How

How do you do, Mr. Dawson? said I, as I followed her out of the carriage.

Mercy on me! (said he, looking earnestly in my face, while the tears trickled down his aged cheek) can it be?

Then, after a moment's pause—

Yes, it is my dear young lady her own self!—Aye, madam, it is many a day since I carried you round these grounds.—Oh how my dame will rejoice to see you!

I hurried in to conceal my emotions. After a slight repast, we retired to our apartments. I attended my aunt to her's, where we found Mrs. Dawson waiting our arrival. She has been thirty years housekeeper at the Priory, poſſeſſes a good underſtanding, and an excellent memory.

Inſtead of retiring to reſt, we talked over paſt events, and wept till mid-

night, Mrs. Dawſon prepared for us our old lodging-rooms, mine opening into Mrs. Merioneth's. Beyond mine are the apartments formerly occupied by my departed parents; and theſe terminate the ſouth ſide of the Priory. Will you believe me, when I tell you, that the gloom of the apartment, and the melancholy ſubjects we had been talking of, ſo oppreſſed my ſpirits, that when I retired to my own room, I could not ſummon reſolution ſufficient to let Fanny leave me?—I was really aſhamed of my own weakneſs; but I laboured under an impulſe of timidity much eaſier to be derided than reſiſted. I could not ſleep.—The moon played through the painted caſement of the windows, and ſhone on a portrait of my mother, which hung on the other ſide of the room. I gazed on it till I

could have fancied it poſſeſſed animation. This led to a train of ideas, which kept me awake till day-light.—I aroſe, looked through the windows on the ground; wept till I could ſee no longer; examined the furniture of the chamber, and found it much the ſame as when I left it, as near as I could recollect; and I thought it was like being reſtored to ſo many old friends. At length, exhauſted nature claimed ſome refreſhment.—I went to-bed, and ſlept ſome hours,—aroſe with renovated ſpirits, and had the ſatisfaction to find all the family much better for their night's repoſe.

The day was devoted to viewing the Priory and grounds, in both of which the preſent poſſeſſor is making great improvements. Lady Derwent's politeneſs removed all reſtraint, and

by the close of the day, I felt quite at home.

The following morning, Mrs. Merioneth devoted to visiting the cottages round the park. I accompanied her. Oh, Jane! you would never have forgotten the rustic simplicity of the scenes. Our arrival had been rumoured; and those whom fate had left were in full expectation of a visit from Madam Merioneth, whose bounty they had often blessed, and whose absence they could not fail to deplore.

The first cottage we entered was Jenkinson's. The old man sat under a tree at the door, holding an infant boy on his knee, the image of ruddy health. Time had struck the good man with his scythe; he could not rise without his crutch, which he called for.

Sit ſtill (ſaid my aunt); I deſire you will not riſe.

Twenty years ago, madam (ſaid he) I ſhould have been on my legs in a minute; but now I have the honour of ſeeing two ſuch ladies, I cannot riſe to make my obeiſance unleſs ſomebody comes to help me.

There is no neceſſity for your riſing (ſaid I); pray is this ſweet boy your grandſon?

Yes, madam.—I beg pardon (ſaid he, looking earneſtly in my face), ſure this muſt be my young lady!

It is Lady Laura (ſaid my aunt); ſhe came on purpoſe to ſee if ſhe could recollect any of you good folks.

Ah! Madam (ſaid the old man, ſighing deeply) there are but few of us left to recollect!—time and misfortune have thinned your old penſioners; and

what is worſe, they ſay our cottages are to be be pulled down, and the ground thrown into the park; and then, God knows what will become of us!

You muſt be miſinformed (ſaid my aunt); Lord Derwent can never think of pulling down the cottages his father built as the recompenſe of faithful ſervitude.

Ah! Madam (cried the old man), Lord Derwent is not Sir William Menoneth.

But ſure (ſaid I) his lordſhip will erect you other dwellings, if he wants the ground on which theſe ſtand?

I am afraid not (was the old man's reply); for five out of eight are already demoliſhed, and the families ſent away; but they were young people, and did not mind moving; but for me, the

the hour that takes me from this place (looking mournfully up to the tree under which he ſat) will be the laſt of my life.—Here I have lived, man and boy, almoſt fourſcore years.

He pauſed.—My aunt aſſured him ſhe would endeavour all in her power to avert the calamity he ſo much feared.

He was grateful for her kindneſs, but did not ſeem to place much hope in her influence. The old man's diſtreſs brought to my mind moſt forcibly, Cowley's Old Man of Verona; and I could not refrain from exclaiming, with the poet,

"A neighb'ring wood, born with himſelf, he ſees,
And loves his old contemporary trees."

I was a little diſguſted at this trait in Lord Derwent's character. What! thought

thought I, pull down a few humble cottages for the paltry conſideration of the ground they occupy, and thereby annul the benevolent intentions of his predeceſſor!

I ſhould think (ſaid I, addreſſing myſelf to Mrs. Merioneth) that it cannot be worth Lord Derwent's while to open the incloſure of his park; for the little ſpot they ſtand upon will ſcarcely pay for an additional fence.

I ſhould think not (was her reply).

At this part of our diſcourſe, a young woman approached from the houſe, bringing with her two chairs. She took, with all a mother's fondneſs, the lovely infant from the old man's arms. A little girl ran after her, and eagerly climbed the vacant knee of her grandfather.

This, ladies, is my ſon's wife.

The

The young woman courtesied, and retired.

And where is your son?

Ah! Madam (shaking his head), we do not know where he is—perhaps in his grave.

Good God! not know where he is?

No! (mournfully fixing his eyes on the little girl that sat on his knee). You must know, ladies, that last Michaelmas fair, my son went to sell a few pigs, to help us out with the winter. We were much alarmed at his staying out all night, but comforted ourselves with thinking the morning would bring him home. We looked for him in vain. His poor wife was almost mad. At length, a man from the next village came to tell us, that he had seen him that morning, much in liquor, in company with a recruiting

ing ſerjeant, with a cockade in his hat. The poor girl haſtened to the town, which is ſeven miles off, and tried, in vain, to trace them. The only information ſhe could gain, was, that they had ſet out for London, with the ſtage. She had neither money to ride, nor ſtrength to walk after them, not having long lain in with that boy. Almoſt broken-hearted, ſhe returned home. We muſt do (ſaid ſhe) the beſt we can for the children, for I cannot find their father. If his lordſhip will but permit the cottage to ſtand, I think I can get them bread. Mr. Dawſon fortunately heard of the affair, and came down to ſee us. He adviſed my daughter to take her children with her, and go up to the Priory, and get permiſſion to ſpeak to the counteſs. He knew the cottages were all condemned,

demned, but he thought, owing to our misfortune, this might be ſpared. Lady Derwent admitted her, made her a preſent, but told her ſhe never interfered with the Earl's plans. I then determined on ſeeing his lordſhip myſelf. He heard my ſtory, and aſked me how old my ſon was? I told him, twenty-five.

A very proper age (ſaid he) to ſerve his country, the king wants ſoldiers—I hope you are a good ſubject?

Yes, my lord: but it is better the king ſhould want ſoldiers, than the poor want bread.

You are diſaffected then?

By no means, my lord; I only think peace is better than war.

And who gave you permiſſion to think at all about it?—I ſuppoſe, old friend, you are for a levelling ſyſtem:

you

you would like to ſee the tree of liberty planted in my park, and come into my houſe, and help yourſelf to what you pleaſed.

God forbid, my lord, that I ſhould ever ſee that day! I want nothing but my ſon; his labour would ſupport his family.

Well, honeſt man (replied his lordſhip), your ſon is not in my keeping; and he is ſo honourably engaged in ſo neceſſary an undertaking, that, could I recal him home by taking a pinch of ſnuff, I certainly ſhould not do it.

I did not expect your lordſhip to take the trouble of ſeeking for my ſon. I only came to beg your lordſhip to ſpare our cottage; for if we are deprived of that, we muſt go to the pariſh.

Well, I will conſider of it; but I think

think ſuch people as you may think yourſelves well off that you have a pariſh to go to.

My aunt ſhrugged her ſhoulders;—I looked, I believe, a little diſdainfully.—The good lady exclaimed, Laura, do not judge too haſtily of your uncle's conduct.

Oh, Madam, my opinion of his principles can never alter. However, Jenkinſon, have a good heart; for if he turns you out of this cottage, I will buy you another.

God for ever bleſs you for ſuch goodneſs, my honoured lady! Oh! how many would it have made happy, if this vaſt eſtate could have been ſecured to you.

Though I have not much (ſaid I) compared to what my uncle has, I will never add to it, by diſtreſſing the poor,

or insulting the unfortunate. We made the poor folks a small present, and departed, loaded with benedictions.

I should have told you that a little poultry, a few vegetables, and what the young woman earns by spinning, supports the family; they told us, Dawson was very kind to them.

Of the other cottages one only was inhabited, and contained an old woman, who had been laundress to my grandfather; her daughter, a widow-woman with a large family, lived with her. Every thing about them announced distress.

How different (said Mrs. Merioneth) was once this spot, the comfortable reward of honest servitude, and the seat of frugal plenty!—How do you live, good people?

On potatoes and butter-milk, my

lady, and we work hard to get that (ſaid a healthy-looking girl, who was ſpinning); for my grandmother cannot do without bread and tea; ſhe is too old to live on potatoes.

Do you get no bread for yourſelves? (ſaid I).

Yes, madam; we ſometimes buy a little meal, and make bread; but then we are forced to make it laſt a great while.

Well (ſaid my aunt) we will endeavour to think of ſome means of leſſening your diſtreſs. I will ſee you again ſoon. She gave them a trifling preſent, as a temporary relief.

God bleſs you, my good lady! (cried the poor old woman); I knew you would come to ſee us. Mr. Dawſon told us you were come down, and our young lady too.—Ah! times are ſtrangely

altered!—Perhaps, ladies, you will be ſo good to beg for us, that our poor cottage may ſtand.

Depend on it we will do all we can to ſerve you; and if we cannot ſave this habitation, we will get you another.

We left this ſcene, wondering at what we had heard, and lamenting what we had ſeen.

About a quarter of a mile farther, we came to another groupe of tenements, nearly in the ſame ſtate as the former. The old inhabitants who were left, were anxiouſly looking for Mrs. Merioneth's approach, and hailed her appearance as a preſage of returning proſperity.

At length we returned to the Priory.—I thought, when my aunt related our morning's ramble, Lady Derwent appeared aſhamed and confuſed.

I hope (ſaid my aunt) I ſhall have my ſiſter's influence exerted for the ſafety of the cottages on the weſt ſide of the park, at leaſt, for the ſake of Jenkinſon and Mary. Lady Derwent replied that ſhe would cheerfully ſupport any plan for the relief of their inhabitants; but ſhe believed the cottages muſt come down.

Lord Merioneth offered ten pounds towards a ſubſcription for the relief of the diſtreſs my aunt had deſcribed. Lady Derwent gave two guineas,—Mrs. Merioneth two guineas,—Mrs. Maynard, Miſs Rutland, Lady Julia, and myſelf, one guinea each.

Mrs. Merioneth was to diſpoſe of theſe contributions as ſhe judged beſt.

Thus ended the ſecond day after our arrival.

On the third day, my aunt ordered

her carriage, and drove to the nearest market-town, where she purchased such necessaries as she deemed would be most acceptable to her poor old friends; and, on her return, we went to work and made linen for the poor families; my Fanny was sent to take measure of them for their gowns, which were made of green stuff; and the following Sunday we had the pleasure of seeing these poor families, decently arrayed, attend divine service in the chapel of the Priory. My aunt was too happy to be reasonable; and, at her request, Lady Derwent ordered them all some refreshment before they went home. Lord Merioneth was quite delighted: and as for me, I was almost inclined to wish his father under-ground, that he might possess the means, as well as the desire, of doing good.

On Monday the earl arrived here, ſome days earlier than was expected, and he has really not brought pleaſure with him. Lady Julia and Miſs Rutland ſcarcely breathe in his preſence. Lady Derwent herſelf appears under viſible reſtraint; and were it not for the good humour and vivacity of his ſon, I think we ſhould all wiſh ourſelves at home again. Mrs. Maynard yeſterday declared herſelf overpowered with *ennui*, becauſe ſhe had no beaux to talk her into ſpirits. Lord Merioneth begged her to be patient for a few days, as he expected a cargo worth his attending to.

Dear conſolating creature, whom do you expect? (cried ſhe.)

Lord Severn, Sir John Bateman, and Charles Clifford, eſq.

The names ſtruck me

Do you know them?

Only Lord Severn (ſhe replied).

Do you, Lady Laura?

Not that I know of, Lord Merioneth.

Well then, take care of your hearts, ladies: for I am told Severn and Clifford are very handſome.

I know they are very agreeable, and muſt be very good if they are your friends (ſaid Mrs. Maynard, dryly).

They are as good as young fellows uſually run now-a-days; but not ſo good but they may be improved by the blooming graces of a captivating widow.

Go (ſaid ſhe) I have abſolutely a great mind to go and teaſe Lord Derwent, by telling him you are making love to me.

How could that teaſe Lord Derwent? (ſaid I).

Good

Good God! (cried ſhe) Laura, do you not know that Merioneth muſt not make love to any woman with leſs than fifty thouſand pounds?

Ellen looked agitated, and Merioneth mortified. Lord Derwent approached, and the converſation ended: and here I will end this long, and, I fear, tireſome letter.

Your's, &c.

LAURA MERIONETH.

LETTER V.

Lady Laura to Miſs Lamly.

The Priory, July 27, 179—.

WELL, Jane, are you prepared to applaud my penetration?—If not—liſten and believe. This morning, before Mrs. Merioneth had made her appearance, I ſtrolled into her dreſſing-room, and ſoon perceived the good ſoul was dying with a ſecret, which ſhe did not know how in the world to be delivered of; and, well knowing that there was no way of coming at it ſo eaſily as appearing inattentive to it, I ſat down, took up a book, and aſked if I ſhould read while ſhe dreſſed?

No, my dear (ſhe replied): I have

ſomething of conſequence to impart, and will not dreſs yet. Then diſmiſſing her attendant, ſhe informed me, that Lord Derwent had made propoſals, ſo flattering and generous, on behalf of his ſon, to your friend, that ſhe hoped I would acquieſce in their united wiſhes, and conſent to receive his addreſſes.

—Are you quite certain, madam, that Merioneth wiſhes his addreſſes to be received?

I have no doubt of it (was her anſwer).

Pardon me (ſaid I) for diſſenting from you; but I have great doubts of it.

Impoſſible! (ſhe cried); you cannot be in earneſt.

Indeed I am.

For Heaven's ſake, Laura, from whence could ſuch ſuſpicions ariſe?

My

My dear madam, I have no ſuſpicions: I reſt on certainties.

Of what then are you certain?

That I have made no impreſſion on Merioneth, and that he is perfectly indifferent to me.

Do you think he will never be otherwiſe?

I think he will not.

Oh (cried ſhe, rather pettiſhly) this comes of your nonſenſical notions of firſt-ſight impreſſions. So, becauſe you did not fall violently in love with him at firſt, you are never to like each other afterwards!

My dear madam, you entirely miſtake the caſe.

No, Laura; it is you who miſtake the caſe: and as to Miſs Rutland, I have talked that matter over with Lady Derwent, who aſſures me, there is no attachment at all between them.

Miſs

Miſs Rutland, and Lord Merioneth! (cried I). Really, madam, I do not comprehend you.

Why, Laura, I have obſerved,—and I think you muſt have obſerved it too, that Lord Merioneth is uſually very attentive to Miſs Rutland; and not knowing how that young lady might interpret his aſſiduities, I frankly mentioned the matter to Lady Derwent, who aſſured me, that Albert knew better what was due to his family, than to think of Miſs Rutland in any other light than that of a friend; and Miſs Rutland (ſaid her Ladyſhip) has too much delicacy, too high a ſenſe of honour, to wound, through my ſon, the peace of his family. Now, to oblige me, Laura, conſider of this, and impower me to give a favourable anſwer to Lord Derwent.

Indeed,

Indeed, I cannot,—and muſt ſay I am very ſorry you ſhould have been at the trouble of examining Lord Merioneth's ſentiments on my account.

Here we were interrupted, and the converſation ended. No wonder there was a ſpare place for my picture. Love is preparing a pretty game at croſs-purpoſes for us; and it ſeems as if there would be adventures enough in our Priory, to furniſh out materials for a modern novel. Here is the humble Clifford bowing to me, whilſt Mrs. Maynard evidently congees to him. Merioneth purſues Ellen, who is purſued by that brute Sir John, her profeſſed admirer. Severn follows Julia, who ſmiles on him without reſtraint; and they are the only part of the family who are left to pleaſe themſelves.

I believe Mrs. Merioneth had ac-

quainted Lord Derwent with the nature of my reply to their propoſals; for, when we met at dinner, his lordſhip was rather more ſtately to me than uſual. Ah! (thought I) you will not awe me into compliance; and I knew he had been lecturing his ſon, for he looked ſerious and uneaſy.

After dinner, when the whole family were aſſembled in the drawing-room, Lord Derwent aſked Clifford to walk with him into the park, and inſpect ſome timber he was about felling.—Mrs. Maynard declared the propoſal was quite in time, for ſhe wanted a walk in the park, to ſee if Myrtle (her ſaddle-horſe, which arrived the day before) would know her.

They departed.—Lady Derwent ſoon after told Julia, ſhe wanted her in the dreſſing-room; and they retired.

Preſently

Preſently Julia returned—Ellen, mama wants you.—For what? (cried ſhe).—Nay, I don't know; but, I believe, to take a walk.—Soon after Mrs. Merioneth contrived to have forgotten ſomething which ſhe muſt fetch herſelf; and ſo we were completely left to make love. I was netting, and continued my work. Merioneth continued playing with Julia's lap-dog.—At length my beau advanced.

Lady Laura, will you forgive my ſtupidity! I am horrid company.

—Really (ſaid I, affecting a look of ſurprife) I had forgotten you were in the room.—Again we were ſilent; at laſt, by mere accident, I ſpoke of Ellen. His fine eyes ſparkled with pleaſure, and he exclaimed—Is ſhe not charming!—She is, indeed (was my reply). He walked to the other end of

of the room; and I, without ceremony, walked off.

After ſpending ſome time in my own apartment, I went in ſearch of the ladies, whom I found in Lady Derwent's dreſſing-room. On my entrance, there was not one of the groupe it contained, but betrayed by their looks their ſecret anxieties. Lady Derwent looked in my face with ſcrutinizing earneſtneſs, as if ſhe would have ſaid, Albert has been commanded to make love to you;—I hope he has ſucceeded. Elſen appeared agitated: Julia ſmiled: Mrs. Merioneth ſimpered; but nobody ſpoke.—Bleſs me! (I exclaimed), looking at Ellen, I am afraid your walk has fatigued you; you look very ill.

—What walk? replied Lady Derwent); we have been here all the afternoon.

—Really,

—Really, ladies (returned I, courteſying) you have been very polite. What apology can you offer for leaving me out of your afternoon party?—

We ſuppoſed (replied Mrs. Merioneth) that we left you in very agreeable company.—

Why, ſo you did (glancing my eye on Ellen): Lord Merioneth is a perpetual fund of entertainment; and this afternoon he has been particularly amuſing.

The blood forſook the cheek of Ellen.

What is the matter with you? (cried Lady Derwent, obſerving her)—

I have got (ſhe replied) an unuſual pain in my ſide.

Ah! thought I, the pain, I fear, is in your heart.—Are you inclined (ſaid I) to take a walk, in ſearch of Mrs. Maynard?

Maynard? Perhaps, exercise may relieve you.

She assented; and, for a wonder, nobody followed us; and in walking through the shrubbery, whom should we meet but the identical hero of my tale. Ellen drew up mighty stately; I could easily perceive she had been informed of the plan in agitation. I could have set her heart at ease; but it was a subject I could not enter on, without wounding her delicacy. He approached,—looked anxiously in her face,—and enquired if she was unwell?

She replied, only a little vapourish, and overcome, I believe, with heat. She leaned on me, and trembled violently. Nothing, I think, could exceed the tenderness of his manner. Perceiving that she walked with difficulty,

he placed himself between us: we each took an arm: he led the way to a seat, threw his arm round her, but was silent. At length, finding we were not likely to become very good company in the garden, I proposed returning to the house. I chatted; Merioneth smiled, and Ellen lost her tremor. We joined the family; and the rest of the day was spent as usual.

Farewel, for the present.

Tuesday noon.

PASSING the music room this morning, the door was half open, and, on seeing Merioneth and Ellen alone, I paused, and heard her entreat him to forbear urging a subject which must involve

involve them both in ruin.—I have no family, nor any fortune (ſhe cried); and I ſhould have no gratitude if I could for a moment encourage hopes which muſt unavoidably defeat all the views of your lordſhip's family.—

Ah! Ellen (ſaid he) is it ſtill neceſſary for me to repeat, that I cannot, in this reſpect, yield to their commands, or ſubmit to their prejudices? My heart, in a choice for life, claims a right to be conſulted, and ſpurns, with honeſt ſcorn, the paltry conſiderations of birth or fortune. I eſteem Lady Laura: ſhe is a charming woman: but I cannot give her that love which has long been only your's.—

He pauſed, and I tripped away. I wiſh he would only ſpeak, that I might ſet all matters to rights again, by telling him, I never will accept of

him. I dare ſay they have told him, that he muſt make love to me; and then, I ſuppoſe, they mean to tell me, that I muſt marry him: but I can aſſure them, they will be much miſtaken. My aunt this morning renewed the ſubject, juſt after I had witneſſed the ſcene I have been relating; but I did not chooſe to make her my confidante on this occaſion. I therefore contented myſelf with remarking, that as it was a matter on which we unfortunately differed, I thought the leſs we ſpoke of it the better.

I cannot give it up ſo eaſily (cried the good lady): I muſt have better reaſons than any you have yet given me, before I can bring myſelf to decline Lord Derwent's propoſals.

Well, madam (ſaid I, vexed, I muſt own, at her obſtinacy) take notice that I

lead

lead you into no errors; for I ſeriouſly declare I never can, nay more, I never will, give my hand to Merioneth.—

Good God! (ſhe replied) what perverſeneſs! Do you expect a more advantageous offer?—

That (I anſwered) is a ſubject I have never thought of.—

Have you any objection to the character of Merioneth?—

Quite the contrary — I admire it very much.—

Do you never intend to marry, Laura, that you thus make a point of rejecting every propoſal that is made to you?—

I certainly do not intend to marry any of thoſe I have rejected (ſaid I).

Here the entrance of Mrs. Maynard put a period to the converſation. She rallied me moſt unmercifully on

the ſubject; and I found it was an alliance that the family conſidered as concluded. I believe Mrs. Maynard ardently wiſhes it to take place, to further views of her own. She is a woman of the world, and does not pay much attention to the peace of others, ſo ſhe promotes her own deſigns. I am a little out of humour at their thus arrogating to themſelves a right to direct my choice. I believe, they will find a failure in their plan. I never will marry where I cannot love; and I, like Merioneth, have no heart to give.

Your's, &c.

LAURA MERIONETH.

LET-

LETTER VI.

Miſs Lumly to Lady Laura.

Lumly Houſe, July 31, 179—

MANY thanks to you, my dear enigmatical friend, for your intereſting letter. It has alarmed and concerned me. You never will be the wife of Merioneth! you have no heart to give! For heaven's ſake, my dear Laura, who poſſeſſes that invaluable jewel? and why is your choice a ſecret? Can it be Clifford? I am inclined to think it is. And yet, where could you ever meet, without the knowledge of Mrs. Merioneth? and ſurely my friend has too high a ſenſe of dignity, to permit a private correſpon-

dence. Be that as it may, I will for the preſent, wave this ſubject, and truſt to your candour, for a full explanation.

I am really grieved at your haſty rejection of Merioneth. I think you have precipitately reſolved on what your cooler reaſon muſt condemn. My dear Laura, do not, I conjure you, by a miſtaken delicacy, refine away your happineſs. You ſpeak affectionately of Merioneth; you acknowledge his merits; but yet he is indifferent to you! But why is it that he is indifferent? Simply becauſe you have never endeavoured to make him otherwiſe; and without giving yourſelf time to examine the circumſtances, you have reſolved never to be an obſtacle to his union with another. Could you, when you breathed that reſolve, ſuppoſe

poſe there was no other bar but your marriage with Merioneth, between him and Miſs Rutland?—From your letter, I learn, that the lady in queſtion is a dependent in Lord Derwent's family. I learn too, that Lord Derwent is a man ambitious of wealth, and impatient of control, and that his ſon (at leaſt ſo I have heard) is entirely dependent on him, not having any ſeparate fortune. Can you think Lord Derwent will ever conſent to ſuch an union? and do you view the extent of the miſery which muſt follow, if they marry without it? He cannot be ſo abſurd as to think ſeriouſly of ſuch an union. I do not ſay but he may have views on Miſs Rutland,—but, I fear, not of an honourable nature.—Do not be ſo determined on the ſubject: at leaſt leave the negociation open;

open: and thus, by destroying the hopes, insure the peace of Ellen; for she will in time become resigned to an event she cannot alter. As to Merioneth, would he not, by an alliance with you, secure to himself all the advantages of wealth, and all the blessings of independence? On the other hand, should he, in defiance of his friends, make a choice in direct opposition to their will, he must perhaps suffer, for a long life, the sting of regret, the severity of reproach, and perhaps to these ills, may be added, the bitter gripe of penury; besides all the accumulating anguish of seeing a lovely woman, whom he had, for mistaken notions of affection, involved in distress, vainly endeavouring to bear up under the severity of her fate, yet hourly consumed by the canker-worm

of remorse. View him, an alien from his family, a nobleman without wealth, and perhaps, a parent without the means of providing for his family. If you have any regard for the peace of his offspring, view well this ſide of the picture: you have hitherto overlooked it. What am I to underſtand of your hint of Mrs. Maynard?—that ſhe is attached to Clifford? But who and what is Clifford? Severn, you ſay, purſues Julia; and Sir John Bateman follows Ellen. Sure he cannot be the friend of Merioneth! He has a ſeat in our neighbourhood, and is a character by no means reſpected. I hope Miſs R. will not fall to his lot.—I am anxious for your cottagers. Perhaps, if you would condeſcend to aſk it, their dwellings might be ſpared them, and you ſaved an unneceſſary expence. I am ſummoned to my father, and muſt unwillingly

unwillingly take my leave of you. I entreat your pardon for the freedom I have uſed: and, to convince me you are not offended, write again, and be exact in your correſpondence. My beſt wiſhes attend you and Mrs. Merioneth; and believe me, with real regard, yours,

JANE LUMLY.

LET-

LETTER VII.

Lady Laura to Miſs Lumly.

The Priory, Auguſt 3, 179—.

A MIGHTY pretty lecture you have thought proper to ſend me! Why, aunt Merioneth could not have worded it better. Oh! I acquit you of a ſuſpicion I had begun to entertain, namely, that love had ſtolen upon your time, to the diſadvantage of friendſhip. I am now quite convinced that Cupid has nothing at all to do with you. Take care that he does not ſome day or other avenge your contempt of him. "And who is Clifford? and what is Clifford?"—Very pretty queſtions, upon my honour! However, to ſet that little

tle

tle heart of thine at eaſe, I will endeavour to relate as much as I know of him.

You muſt recollect, that, two years ago this ſummer, my dear and lamented father was perſuaded to try the Malvern waters; and during our reſidence there, I often, in my rambles, noticed a young man of genteel appearance, who was uſually alone, and frequently reading. Mrs. M. was at that time confined to the houſe, with a ſprained ankle, and Fanny was my conſtant attendant. It happened, one day, that we had walked farther than uſual, and, finding myſelf fatigued, I looked round for ſome place where we might reſt, before we returned home. Fanny called my attention to a little cottage, at ſome diſtance, which was almoſt emboſomed in trees. We

walked

walked towards it. A winding path led to the door: a little Gothic porch, in which were placed two garden-chairs, led to the houſe. As we approached, a neat-looking woman, in mourning, came out to meet us. I advanced, and requeſted permiſſion to ſit down. She invited us into the houſe. My curioſity was excited, and I followed her. Heavens! what a charming little place it was! It is even now dancing before my eyes. There were four apartments, all on the ground floor—the firſt a kitchen, the next a ſitting-room; and ſhe informed me there were two bed-rooms. In the ſitting room, which was large, there was an elegant book-caſe, a harpſichord, and various ſketches of landſcapes.—Theſe things appriſed me that my conductreſs was not the owner.—

Do

Do you live here alone? said I.—Almoſt, ma'am, ſhe replied; for I have lately loſt one of the beſt of ladies; and, ſince that event, my maſter is ſeldom at home.

Your maſter is then a widower?

Lord bleſs you, ma'am! no: he is quite a young gentleman: it is his mother that is dead; and he grieves ſo mainly for her, that I am afraid he will never be himſelf again.—There is his picture, ma'am—opening the door of an inner room—and it is reckoned vaſtly like him.

I looked at the picture, and was wondering where I had ſeen a face like it, when Fanny exclaimed, Bleſs me! my Lady, it muſt be the gentleman we have ſo often ſeen walking in the fields, in mourning.

—It is, indeed (ſaid I) very like him.

Ah!

Ah! (cried ſhe, looking through the window) here he comes.

I ſtarted. It is aukward enough (ſaid I): but however we muſt beg his pardon for the intruſion.

I deſired Fanny to go with the houſekeeper, and inform him that her Lady, fatigued with walking, had requeſted permiſſion to reſt a little while in his houſe.

In a moment he entered the room, and, after a few introductory compliments, requeſted me to take ſome refreſhment. I objected, and aroſe to depart.—He entreated me to ſit a few minutes more, and diſcourſed on various ſubjects, with eaſe and taſte; but there was a ſerioufneſs in his manner, tempered with ſadneſs.

Your cottage, ſir, (ſaid I) is Arcadia realiſed.

I have loſt (he replied) ma'am, an invaluable friend; and my cottage is not what it uſed to be.—He pauſed; and I again aroſe to take leave. He put on his hat to attend me; I objected to his taking ſo much trouble. At length we compromiſed the matter, and I agreed he ſhould ſee me over the firſt field; and there he bowed gracefully, and wiſhed me a good morning. I turned my head involuntarily, to look after him. He was fixed on the ſpot, looking after me. I took the arm of Fanny, and hurried away.

Fanny had learned a whole world of particulars, and had formed quite an acquaintance with the ſuperintendant of the cottage. Lord! my Lady, (ſhe exclaimed) who would think ſuch a handſome man, and ſo much of a gentleman

tleman too, would have lived ſo many years ſhut up in that cottage with a ſick mother?

How long has he lived there? ſaid I. Nine years (ſhe anſwered); but if your Ladyſhip, can ſpare me this afternoon, I have promiſed Mrs. Jenny to go and drink tea with her.

Oh! you may go (ſaid I): but do not mention at home that I have been in any houſe; for the earl may be diſpleaſed at it.

Here ended the firſt viſit.—I was reſtleſs and uneaſy:—I could think of nothing but the handſome cottager.

At night, when Fanny came to undreſs me, ſhe informed me, that the gentleman's name was Clifford—that his friends had been bankers of great conſequence, but had ſuffered ſeverely in the American war. A failure had

been the conſequence. The banker died through grief and diſappointment, and his lady never recovered his loſs. She ſtaid in London to aſſiſt in ſettling the affairs; and then, collecting the wreck of a once ample fortune, ſhe, with her only ſon, then at Eton, retired to this place, where they have ever ſince reſided. Fanny concluded by obſerving that Mr. Clifford talked of ſelling the cottage, and leaving the country.

About this time it was my fate to attract the attention of a celebrated ſporting character. He made propoſals to my father, who, diſliking his conduct, rejected his ſuit; in conſequence of which, he left Malvern in diſguſt.

My father mended ſlowly; my aunt grew worſe, and was confined to her

chamber.

chamber. I divided my time between two ſuch valued invalids, and frequently thought of the cottage hero, but heard no more of him. I did not chooſe to aſk Fanny any queſtions, though I would have given worlds to have known whether he was ſtill in the country.

Thus paſſed as heavy a month as I ever recollect ſpending. At length my ſpirits ſunk under the confinement, and my indulgent friends inſiſted on my having again recourſe to my morning walks, as a reſtorative to my ſpirits. I complied with their wiſhes; and one morning, paſſing through a field which led to a favourite walk, I ſaw a man, on the other ſide of the hedge, view me with great earneſtneſs. Fanny likewiſe noticed him, and whiſpered that we had better turn back.

Without anſwering her, I turned round, and we quickened our pace to regain the road. In a moment, he burſt through an aperture in the hedge, and, rudely ſeizing my arm, told me I muſt go with him. Fanny ſcreamed violently. Terror kept me ſilent. I evaded his graſp, and ran with all poſſible ſpeed towards the road. He purſued me, leaving Fanny behind. At length I was ſo exhauſted, that, though in ſight of the road, I deſpaired of gaining it. At that fortunate moment, I ſaw a little ſpaniel bound over the ſtyle; and immediately after Clifford appeared, who, ſeeing my ſituation (for the ruffian ſtill purſued me) ruſhed forward to my aſſiſtance—Oh! ſave me, (I cried) for God's ſake, ſave me;—and ſunk in his arms.—Be compoſed, (cried he) my dear madam,

you are perfectly ſafe. Who is the wretch that has ſo alarmed you?—The fellow, however, had made his eſcape. Fanny now came up; ſhe had ſeen him make off through the hedge, and run over the other field.

I have done wrong (ſaid he) to let the wretch eſcape me; but how (looking tenderly in my face) could I reſign a treaſure ſo unexpectedly preſented? He turned to Fanny—have you no knowledge of the perſon that thus inſulted your lady?

I really think (ſhe replied) that it is Lord ——'s huntſman in diſguiſe.

Nothing more likely, ſaid he. Then there is no doubt but he had a right honourable employer. I ſhall never ceaſe to rejoice in my fortunate appearance.—Then turning to me—Permit me to attend you home, ma-

dam, said he, and let me hope that you will not walk again without a protector.

I believe (replied I) that I shall not have the courage to walk out again while we continue here.

He sighed, but did not answer.

On our arrival at home, we found that neither my father nor aunt was yet stirring. I thanked my companion for his civility, and requested that the circumstance might not transpire, as it would give needless anxiety to those friends whose peace I wished most to preserve. I had before given Fanny orders to be secret.

He arose to take—leave asked permission to enquire after my health;—I hesitated;—he bowed, and departed.

I retired to my own room, thought on the circumstances of this strange affair,

affair, but could find no clue to unravel the myſtery. I thought of Clifford too; in ſhort, I thought of little elſe. I had ſeen him perhaps for the laſt time: and in what a ſtrange manner had I taken my leave of him!—My morning rambles too were ended. I dared not walk again for fear of encountering another outrage.

Mrs. Merioneth was ſurprized at my unwillingneſs to go out; and I was obliged, in part, to relate my adventure; but ſtill I could not bring myſelf to acknowledge that I had ever before ſeen or thought of my preſerver. My aunt could not help mentioning the affair to the earl, who determined on returning immediately to Twickenham.

They made but little doubt that it was a plan of ——'s to get me into his power; and this opinion gained ſtrength,

strength, on hearing that his affairs were so deranged, that he was obliged to quit the country. Under such circumstances, my fortune was doubtless a desirable object. However, this is mere conjecture, for it is an affair we never fathomed.

The day before we quitted Malvern, Fanny entreated permission to go and take leave of her cottage acquaintance. I had no inclination at any time to refuse her any gratification in my power to give her;—but I never assented more willingly to any thing in my life. I thought the hours uncommonly tedious, till she returned. I retired early, for the pleasure of hearing some news of Clifford.

Not to tire you with prolixity, I learned that he was much hurt at my not permitting him to call again. He saw

ſaw Fanny, and aſked innumerable queſtions relative to my health, ſituation, &c. and ſeemed much agitated when he heard we were to leave Malvern ſo ſpeedily.

I wiſh your ladyſhip (cried Fanny) could but have ſeen how diſtreſſed he looked; I am ſure you would never have forgot him.

Perhaps, ſaid I, (riſing from my ſeat) I never ſhall, as it is.

I was vexed at letting ſuch a declaration eſcape me, and haſtily diſmiſſed my attendant.

The following morning, before the family was ſtirring, I was taking, as was my uſual practice, my ſolitary breakfaſt, when the ſervant of the houſe opened the parlour door, and announced Mr. Clifford. Heavens! how my heart throbbed! He advanced,

entreated

entreated me to pardon the intruſion of that viſit. I could not hear (he continued) that you were going, without wiſhing to ſee you at leaſt once more; perhaps, I have offended.—He pauſed.—I could not anſwer.

It is too plain I have (added he). Farewel, moſt lovely of women!—(hurrying to the door). Clifford may be wretched, but he has no right to intrude his griefs on you.

Stay, ſir (ſaid I, advancing to him) ſtay, while I aſſure you that I have not ceaſed to be grateful for your late kindneſs—that your viſit here is no intruſion, and that if, at any future period of our lives, fortune ſhould permit us again to meet, I ſhall always cheerfully acknowledge my obligations to Mr. Clifford.

A thouſand thouſand thanks (he exclaimed)

exclaimed) for this conſoling aſſurance. But do not, my dear madam, ſo greatly over-rate a trifling ſervice, in which fortune had more merit than myſelf. I was in her hands, the humble inſtrument of your ſafety.

Before I could reply, Fanny entered, with a meſſage from my father.

I detain you (he cried).—Fanny left the room.—I made a motion to reach the door.—He placed himſelf before it, ſeized my hand, and exclaimed with a tremulous voice—Deign but to tell the wretched Clifford, that you will ſometimes think of him, ſometimes commiſerate—Oh! before we part, perhaps for ever, do not thus rigidly refuſe me one conſoling word to ſoften this cruel ſeparation.

Mr. Clifford (ſaid I) you muſt not detain me.

He ſtill forcibly held my hand.

Sure

Sure I am not ſo wretched, as to have offended you! But you will (looking earneſtly in my face) forgive my inadvertencies, they are the effects of deſpair.

You diſtreſs me, ſir, I am not offended.—Pray leave me.

I will obey you, madam. But to convince me I have not excited your contempt, condeſcend to ſay, you will ſometimes think of Clifford.

I will, I will (ſaid I, with energy).

He dropped on one knee, kiſſed my hand with fervour, and exclaimed.—For this kind aſſurance, moſt charming Lady Laura (he had learned my name from Fanny) receive my unfeigned thanks. Oh! may every wiſh of your heart be gratified, and every bleſſing multiplied!—Again he kiſſed my hand, and hurried out of the houſe. I ſat down, overcome with my own agita-

tions, which I concealed in his presence.

Fanny again entered. Mrs. Merioneth was up, and wished to see me.

Does she know who has been here?—

No, my lady.—

Does the earl know?

She answered as before.

Then oblige me, by not mentioning it.

That very day we left Malvern, and staid one month at Twickenham, when the earl was advised to reside entirely in the neighbourhood of Bristol. You are acquainted that we never left that place till after I sustained my irreparable loss.

Clifford was frequently in my thoughts. I endeavoured in vain to forget him; and whenever any propo-

ſals were made to me of marriage, I found he had more claims upon my heart than my judgment approved. I reſolved to forget him, but, at the ſame time, determined never to marry till I had accompliſhed that reſolution. This was the exact ſtate of my heart when we met here. Our mutual ſurpriſe was eaſily concealed from the company, as they entered unexpectedly, and ſurpriſed all, by their appearance. We were formally introduced to each other. I believe I bluſhed a little; I know he was agitated.

He ſeized an early opportunity of ſpeaking to me alone, congratulated himſelf on this fortunate meeting, hoped I had not ceaſed to think ſometimes of Clifford.—Ay, Jane! he knew but little of my heart.—I told him, that meeting him had given me great pleaſure.

Why

Why then (interrupting me) that air of reſerve on my approach?—

I had never, ſir, informed my friends that I knew the gentleman who had ſo eſſentially ſerved me. How then could I take upon me, ſo ſurrounded by ſpectators, to announce my prior knowledge of you?—

I am anſwered, madam (returned he). Merioneth joined us, and the converſation ended.

I learned by their converſation, that he had been for ſome months on the continent, and had become acquainted with Merioneth in Italy. I ſuppoſe it was ſoon announced to him by the earl, who ſeems fond of his company, that I was the intended wife of Albert; for Clifford behaves to me with nearly as much ſolemnity as if I were really ſhackled.

Thus I have given you an account of my acquaintance with Clifford. I have not encouraged a private correſpondence; for I never heard from him, or of him, from the time I left Malvern till we met here. And, without knowing theſe particulars, is it poſſible you could be ſerious in wiſhing to ſee me the wife of Merioneth, merely becauſe it may be made ſubſervient to my intereſt? Should I,—admitting that he could be perſuaded to propoſe himſelf to me,—ſhould I take the heſitating and reluctant hand of a man whoſe heart, I know, is devoted to another? Shall I ſacrifice my preſent feelings and my future peace, and entail laſting miſery on a deſerving man, for the paltry conſideration of being, what the world calls, well eſtabliſhed? Jane, you ſhould have known me better.—I know

all

all the value of wealth, all the advantages of rank; but refuſing to marry Merioneth, can deprive me of neither. I do not pretend to judge of the propriety of his attachment to Miſs Rutland: I only know that they are two deſerving perſons, whoſe happineſs I will do every thing in my power to promote.

Auguſt 4.

I HAVE juſt parted from Mrs. Merioneth: ſhe has been renewing the old theme—Do, pray, Laura, to oblige me, take one week to conſider of the advantageous propoſals made by your uncle.—

Were I to conſider for a twelvemonth, madam, I could return no other

anſwer than the one I have already given.—I cannot accept Lord Merioneth.—

Do not be ſo poſitive. Say you will think of it.—

I can ſay no ſuch thing.—

Muſt I tell your uncle this?—

Certainly, madam, if you pleaſe.

I cannot (ſhe replied) bring myſelf ſo precipitately to deſtroy his hopes.

Why (ſaid I) were ſuch hopes ever raiſed?

We had flattered ourſelves (ſhe replied) that, as you had no other engagements, you would comply with our united wiſhes. It is an alliance which has the conſent of all your friends.—

Yes, madam; but it is in want of my own.—

Strange girl! (ſhe anſwered, and left me to myſelf). I took up my pen

pen to tranſcribe the converſation. How tireſome is their obſtinacy! I really will ſpeak myſelf to Merioneth on the ſubject, and tell him to make love to me, in order that I may get rid of their importunities. As to Lord Severn, he ſtill follows Julia. Mrs. Maynard purſues Clifford; while the boiſterous addreſſes of that brute Sir John, to the timid, and, I believe, unhappy, Ellen, appear ſanctioned by the earl, and forwarded by the counteſs. It is ſtrange, that they can wiſh her ſacrificed to ſuch a wretch: but any thing, ſo they ſeparate her from Merioneth; for I cannot ſuppoſe them blind to his fondneſs for her, nor can ſee ſo great an impropriety, or ſo many attending ills, as you repreſent, in his marrying of her,—ſince, I think I can venture to affirm, Merioneth will never

bow to a gilded idol; and I am ſure he has too much honour ever to propoſe any other than honourable terms to the object of his love.

As to our cottages,—at my aunt's entreaty they are to remain. The families from the farther ones are to be removed to thoſe which are empty, by Jenkinſon's; and the latter cottages are to come down, and the dog-kennels are to be erected in their place. A wall is, however, to be built, on purpoſe to conceal the cottages, which are ſuffered to remain, from the ſight of my uncle's right honourable eyes. His optics are too weak to bear the ſight of diſtreſs; and the poor inhabitants have already had orders not to walk in the park while the family remain at the Priory. I have viſited them ſeveral times; and nothing can exceed the

gratitude of Jenkinſon, and poor Mary, for the privilege of retaining their old habitations.

I cannot conclude this letter, without relating a circumſtance which occurred this morning at breakfaſt. Lord Severn had rode out, and was not returned. Speaking of Lord Severn (ſaid my aunt, addreſſing herſelf to the earl), Do you know if the late Lord Severn's lady is yet living?

He replied, the late earl never was married; laying a particular ſtreſs on the laſt ſentence.

Inſtantly the cup fell from the hand of Ellen.—Lady Derwent looking at her with great tenderneſs, obſerved that ſhe looked ill, and adviſed her to walk a little in the garden. She availed herſelf of the propoſal, and hurried out of the room.—

You have quite ſpoiled that girl (cried Lord Derwent, haughtily). Her affectation is become inſupportable.—

Surely, my lord (ſaid Merioneth) on this occaſion, Miſs Rutland's weakneſs may be defended.—

Perhaps, ſir, I may think otherwiſe; but I obſerve (continued he, ſarcaſtically) that you frequently court the honour of defending her.—

I always conſider it as a point of honour to defend the abſent (ſaid Merioneth).

The entrance of Severn ended the diſcourſe. Certainly Miſs Rutland's fate is ſomehow interwoven with the family of Severn. They are ſcarcely known to each other; and yet his name is never mentioned, without her betraying the moſt viſible emotions. I wiſh I could obtain her confidence; but

but all attempts at it would appear matter of curiosity. Adieu, for the present.

Your's, &c.

LAURA MERIONETH.

LETTER VIII.

Lady Laura to Miſs Lumly.

The Priory, Auguſt 7, 179—.

NO change yet in our politics. Ellen ſtill looks dejected, and cautiouſly avoids Merioneth, who as cautiouſly avoids me. The baronet juſt now rudely took hold of Ellen, who was dreſſed in her habit, as we had agreed to go out for a ride—ſwore ſhe was a tight little filly, and fit to grace a royal ſtud. She ſhrunk from his violence, and placed herſelf by the ſide of Clifford; on which occaſion, Merioneth looked with the dignity of an emperor. Julia, Ellen, Mrs. Maynard, and myſelf,

ſelf, are going out on horſeback, eſcorted by Merioneth, Severn, Clifford, and the baronet—every one a beau, you may perceive. Mrs. Maynard, Ellen, and Julia, ride horſes they are acquainted with; but to mine I am an entire ſtranger:—Merioneth has ridden him, and gives him a good character. The horſes are ready. Adieu.

Wedneſday night.

SUCH an accident! but I ſuppoſe only another contrivance of Don Cupid's; however, take the particulars. This has been rather an eventful day. I took my leave of you in the morning, juſt as we were ſetting off for a ride. We had not gone far, when Mrs.

Maynard challenged Sir John to gallop with her through the park. He would not go without a bet.

Well (cried this ſpirited lady) two guineas to one, that my horſe reaches the gate firſt.—

Done! cried the knight—and off they rode.

They had ſcarcely paſſed us, before my unruly beaſt ſnorted, and pawed, and finally inſiſted on following them. I endeavoured in vain to reſtrain him; he flew off, and diſtanced them in an inſtant. I perceived that I could not keep my ſeat long; ſo, diſengaging my foot from the ſtirrup, I prepared to throw myſelf from his back as ſoon as I could ſee a favourable opportunity; for the road which we were in was ſo much interſected with trees, that it was difficult to chooſe a ſafe place to fall in.

At

At length we approached a gate, which I feared he would attempt to leap; ſo I inſtantly threw myſelf down. I fell againſt a tree, but without receiving any injury.

My ſteed flew over the gate; and, as I leaned againſt the tree to recover my breath, I was alarmed by the approach of a cow, who bellowed outrageouſly. I was in the greateſt terror; for I recollected hearing of the exploits of this vicious animal; but, to my great relief, I ſaw Clifford approaching. He obſerved my ſituation, and rode up to the cow, which he with ſome difficulty, drove away; then, diſmounting, he came up to me, and enquired, with great tenderneſs, whether I had received any injury from the accident?

None (ſaid I); but it is very doubtful

ful what might have been the conſequence, if you had not again arrived at a critical minute.

To have been inſtrumental to Lady Laura's ſafety (ſaid he) is an event I ſhall ever think on with pleaſure.

And I with gratitude.—But where is the party?

Not far off, he anſwered.—[As he ſpake they appeared.]—That unfeeling wretch, Sir John (continued he) propoſed to bet five guineas to two that you kept your ſeat, provided nobody pretended to follow. Mrs. Maynard had declined the race, on ſeeing the unexpected flight of your horſe.

Oh! Oh! (ſaid Mrs. Maynard, as they approached) Sir John, if any one had taken up your bet, you would have been prettily lurched. Here is the lady, it is true; but where is the ſteed?

Gone

Gone to the devil for aught I care! (ſaid the knight;) I ſhould ſurely have won, if the race had not been interrupted by him.

The lady replied, ſhe would ride againſt him any other day. But neither of theſe well-bred folks thought proper to aſk me if I had received any injury from my fall. The reſt of the party were very politely enquiring into the particulars of my diſaſter, when they were interrupted by Mrs. Maynard, who exclaimed—What a fuſs you all make about nothing! the lady, you may perceive, is very well; and the gentleman is much obliged to your runaway ſteed, Lady Laura, for giving him ſuch an opportunity of ſhowing his gallantry.

Indeed, madam (ſaid Clifford, warmly) you are much miſtaken; no event

which

which places this lady in danger (bowing to me) can be ſatisfactory to her friends.

And among thoſe of that deſcription, you have the vanity to rank yourſelf? ſaid the lady.

Mr. Clifford (ſaid I) madam, has done me an honour I will ſtudy to deſerve.

Well ſaid, ingenuous Lady Laura! (ſhe replied) I am not one that doubt it, I aſſure you. But come—ſure this ſilly accident is not to interrupt our ride?—

By no means (ſaid I); I beg you will proceed: I ſhall walk back to the Priory.—

While this converſation was paſſing, Lord Merioneth diſpatched a ſervant in ſearch of the runaway.

Clifford (ſaid Mrs. Maynard, ſarcaſtically)

caſtically) I ſuppoſe you are engaged.—

I certainly, ma'am, ſhall not leave Lady Laura alone.—

If you will permit me, couſin, (ſaid Albert) to attend you, I will give my horſe to a ſervant, and—

By no means, my Lord, (cried Clifford) it is unneceſſary. I certainly ſhall not reſign the honour of walking with this lady, unleſs ſhe commands it.—

What nonſenſe! (cried Mrs. Maynard)—Are we to go on, or to return?—

Go on by all means, ſaid I.—

Indeed (ſaid Ellen) I have not courage to proceed. Pray Mr. Clifford, help me to diſmount.

Before he could reach her horſe, Merioneth had ſprung from his, and

caught her in his arms; then bowing to the party on horſeback, wiſhed them a pleaſant ride.

So (ſaid Mrs. Maynard) the four turtles chooſe to bill alone.

They rode away.

Mrs. Maynard (ſaid Ellen) may be very witty; but I am ſure ſhe is very ill-natûred.

Her wit (replied Merioneth) is frequently ill-timed.—

Our beaux led the horſes; for, of two ſervants, one, I have before obſerved, was gone in purſuit of the horſe, and the other by Lord Merioneth's orders, continued with the party.

I took the offered arm of Clifford. The timid Ellen, encouraged by my example, leaned on Merioneth; and in this manner we reached the Priory, where

where we found the elders in cloſe converſation, and ſeparated till dinner.

We then met the whole party. Mrs. Maynard rallied me moſt unmercifully on my want of courage; and declared ſhe would gallop the ſpirited creature five miles, for ten guineas, againſt Lightning, Sir John's favourite horſe, which he brought here with him, for fear in his abſence it ſhould be neglected. Sir John took the offer. We all endeavoured to diſſuade the lady from the enterpriſe, but without ſucceſs. Would to heaven, ſhe would direct her kind glances towards the knight:—they would be a charming pair!

After dinner, the gentlemen went to the ſtable. The horſe was ſtopped at a neighbouring village, by a peaſant who knew him, and of courſe brought him home. The ſervant had

not taken the right route in the purſuit, Mrs. Maynard followed them.

Where are you going? cried Lady Derwent.—

Only to ſee if the horſe is ſafe (ſaid ſhe) and likely to carry me to-morrow—for I am determined to win that fellow's money, pointing to Sir John.

Then you have no apprehenſion of a broken neck? ſaid I.

Not in the leaſt: beſides I ſhall inſiſt on Clifford's going with us; and, if there is any abſolute danger, I ſhall call on him to diſmount, looſe my foot from the ſtirrup, and jump into his arms.

You muſt (ſaid I) firſt provide him with a horſe ſwift enough to keep pace with you.

Oh, he ſhall ride Myrtle!—I know

he will, if not checked, keep pace with any in Lord Derwent's ſtud.

Then ride him yourſelf, ſaid Mrs. Merioneth.

Poo! that will entirely change the wager; and, I tell you, I muſt win this ten guineas. Why, it will pay my next ſubſcription to the opera.

Aye (ſaid Julia) but I don't think, if you gallop Wildfire, that you will ever come back alive; and in that caſe, you will not be called on for another ſubſcription to the opera.—

Mrs. Maynard laughed at her ſimplicity, and followed the gentlemen.

We read till tea, when we met again. Mrs. Maynard then announced that Wildfire had received no injury, and that ſhe ſhould ride him the next day. The gentlemen were of courſe to attend; and ſhe poſitively ſtipu-

lated that Clifford ſhould ride Myrtle, and keep near; becauſe (ſhe cried) I know you are very uſeful in theſe caſes.—

In what caſes (ſaid he) have I the honour of being thought ſo ſerviceable?

Why, in this caſe!—(replied this ſtrange woman) ſuppoſe a lady finds her horſe abſolutely unmanageable—which I am far from expecting will be my misfortune—and is obliged to ſpring from his back, can you not open your arms to receive her?

I certainly, ma'am, will endeavour to prevent any accident which you may be liable to from this undertaking; but I think it would be better entirely to drop the ſcheme.

No, no (cried Sir John) I will not agree to that; nor I don't think it is

fair

fair for Clifford to be allowed to keep up with you.—

Why not? (ſaid the lady).—

Why not! (repeated he)—why, becauſe you may, perhaps, like better to walk with him than to ride with me, eh!—Believe I am right (winking ſignificantly at Merioneth).

Well, and what of that? (ſaid the lady, with great compoſure).

What of that!—why then, mayhap, you may ride a little way; then jump from your horſe; hop off with him; declare it was an accident; and want your money again. But I ſhan't ſtand any nonſenſe: down with the bit.—

Down with your's (ſaid the lady) and let Merioneth hold ſtakes.

This was done.

Now then (ſaid the knight) I bar all jumping off; unleſs, indeed, you

are fairly thrown — that alters the caſe.—

No, no (cried the lady), you are not to have every thing your own way. I will ſit him, if poſſible; if not, I jump off; and, in that caſe, the bet ſhall remain for a farther trial with Myrtle.

This was, after a deal of altercation, finally agreed to.—Are you not weary of ſuch a jargon of nonſenſe, and do you not wonder how this brute of a baronet got admittance here? I believe I can explain this ſeeming myſtery. Sir John is a borough-monger, and permits Lord Derwent to nominate the candidates. It is whiſpered too, that his eſtate is deeply mortgaged to the earl. This accounts for their intimacy. Lord Derwent, I obſerve, uſually contrives to make his acquaintance ſub-

ſervient

ſervient to his intereſt; and Sir John is moſt devoutly at his diſpoſal.

A party on the water was propoſed for the evening. Chance placed me by the ſide of Merioneth. I thought it an excellent opportunity to come to ſome explanation on the views of our family. It was an aukward ſubject to introduce; and yet I wiſhed to inform him, that I was not leagued againſt his peace. I pauſed for a moment, then took courage, and ſpoke of the propoſals I had received.

Were theſe propoſals ſaid I, my lord, ſanctioned by your approbation? Do favour me with an ingenuous anſwer.—

Will Lady Laura (ſaid he) pardon my temerity, when I confeſs, that thoſe propoſals never received my aſſent; and that my opinion of their propriety has never been aſked? I was recalled

from

from Italy, to begin at once my political and my matrimonial career: in both, I fear, I ſhall diſappoint the wiſhes of my father. I have, my ſweet couſin, the deepeſt ſenſe of your perfections, the moſt profound admiration of your character, but I have no heart to offer for your acceptance. My fondeſt wiſhes took an early root: they are interwoven with my exiſtence, and never, but with that exiſtence, can they end. The man, Lady Laura, whom you honour with your choice, ſhould have but one object in the world, and that ſhould be yourſelf.—

—A truce (ſaid I) with compliments; and let us think how to avoid the high road to matrimony, to which theſe good folks are endeavouring to ſend us poſt.

I muſt rely (he anſwered) on your generoſity.

generosity. You are independent, and need not fear offending.—

But they will not, (said I) take my refusal.—

How strange (he replied) is such a procedure! — What can be done? The refusal must come from you, cousin; for what objection could I possibly make to receiving the honour of your hand?—

Why tell them (said I, laughing) what you have just told me, that you like another better.—

Thank you, fair lady; but at present that declaration would not be quite convenient.—

Well (said I) set your heart at rest; appear very attentive to me. I will complain of your importunities, slight your civilities, laugh at your solicitude, (that is, when you tell me you have had any),

any), and, in due time, formally reject you.

He looked as if he could have said, he was very much obliged me. He kissed my hand, and vowed I was an angel.

We had now reached the lake, and most of the company were already in the boat. Clifford offered me his hand; I took it: he looked serious, and sighed deeply. Ellen appeared anxious and uneasy—Merioneth seated himself by me, and played the lover admirably. I believe they were all surprised at his attention. Mrs. Merioneth simpered, Lord Derwent relaxed his severity, and the countess looked delighted, beyond what I had ever seen before. I, really, Jane, was sorry for the disappointment they are doomed to feel.

After about an hour spent on the water,

water, madam Cynthia reminded us that it was time to return. Lord and Lady Derwent, accompanied by Mrs. Merioneth, walked fast, for fear of the damps, which fell apace. There was no longer any reſtraint; Merioneth caught the hand of Ellen, who was ſtruggling to releaſe herſelf from the knight: I leaned on his other arm.

Happy Merioneth! (ſaid Clifford, advancing) you are, indeed, a favourite of fortune.—

Do not be envious man, (ſaid Merioneth); but come and ſhare in her favours.—

May I hope to be admitted, ladies?—

Certainly, if you wiſh it (ſaid I).

Oh, Laura! (in a low voice) if I wiſh it! (taking my hand). Is there a thing on earth ſo dear to Clifford, as your ſociety?

Perhaps

Perhaps you might have been offended at such a declaration, made in such a manner:—but, for my part, I was too pleased to be angry.

And here I will pause for the present, for I am too weary to proceed.

Thursday morning, 11 o'clock.

AS we entered the house, Merioneth observed, that it was not yet supper time, and proposed adjourning to the music-room. The plan was adopted. They entreated me to sing: I complied. Clifford accompanied me on the harpsichord, on which he is a great proficient. Actuated by a wish to please, (why should I deny it?) I exerted myself, and, I believe, sung with judgment, a fa-

a favourite air of Clifford's. He thanked me again and again, for, what he termed, my condeſcending kindneſs, while his manly countenance glowed with animation. A ſummons to ſupper interrupted our muſic, juſt as the timid Ellen was preparing to ſing.

In a few days we are to have a maſqued ball; tickets are already given out in great numbers, and the party is expected to be numerous and faſhionable. We have ſent to London for dreſſes, which we expect down this evening. Sir John, Mrs. Maynard, and Clifford, are gone to prepare for the race. Mrs. Merioneth is with Lady Derwent in her dreſſing-room. Julia has juſt left me: ſhe has been admitted to the ſynod, and informs me, that they are employed in congratulating each other on the good under-

ſtanding which, laſt night, appeared to ſubſiſt between me and the heir of our noble houſe. Oh, Jane! what a diſappointment will the ſequel be to their hopes! But why would they not take my firſt deciſive anſwer? I have ever ſaid I would not marry Merioneth; I muſt again repeat it. I ſhall be glad when I have done with this troubleſome ſubject. I ſee Ellen walking in the ſhrubbery alone; I will join her, and walk till dinner.

Thurſday afternoon, 5 o'clock.

IT wants two hours to tea, which time I dedicate to my pen. I left you in the morning, to join Ellen: I found the

she had been weeping. On my accosting her, she was viewing, with great earnestness, a small portrait. I requested leave to examine it; and, with a trembling hand, she resigned it to my care. At the same time she drew from a case another of the same size.

This (said I, viewing the first she had presented) was certainly your mother; and I should really think, did not the dress convince me to the contrary, that it was taken for you.

I inspected the other, and thought I could trace a distant resemblance of Severn; but, as this was only conjecture, I did not venture to intimate it to my companion, who, sighing, told me, they were the miniatures of her parents.

But why (said I) my dear Ellen, do you not endeavour to suppress this

unavailing sorrow? We are all born to part from those we love. Death assails, under various forms, the heart of every reasonable being; and the tears with which we bedew the graves of our parents, have scarcely ceased to moisten the earth which contains their ashes, before our own posterity are called upon to repay the same debt to us.—

I am sorry (said she) to appear sad; I cannot heave a sigh but breathes ingratitude to Lady Derwent:—her kindness should efface from my heart every recollection of sorrow.

Had I interrogated her, I might, perhaps, have heard some particulars of her story; but I despise the meanness of working on the moment of distress, to disclose the weakness of a feeling heart; or to nourish, by ill-placed

placed pity, ſenſations which prey upon its peace.

I changed the diſcourſe; talked of dreſs, plays, balls, and concerts. This method ſucceeded: ſhe ſmiled at my deſcriptions; and, after ſpending a pleaſant hour, we returned to dreſs for dinner.

On entering the dining room, we met the racers. Mrs. Maynard was in great ſpirits; ſhe had actually won her bet. Sir John was very much out of humour, at being beaten by a woman.

Aye (ſhe cried) Laura, you may now ride him very ſafely; for, I believe, I have given him enough of galloping.—

I hope (ſaid Merioneth) Lady Laura will never ride him again: he is too ſpirited for a lady.—

Why then did you before recom-

mend him to Laura? ſaid Mrs. Maynard.

Becauſe I was not acquainted with his tricks. I had ridden him once, and he carried me eaſy; beſides, the groom gave him a very good character.—

Which he merited (ſaid Mrs. Maynard); for he really is an excellent creature.

Sir John ſwore he was a devil,—and the converſation dropped.

Our dreſſes are arrived.—I am ſummoned to Lady Derwent's dreſſing-room. Before I ſleep, I will endeavour to cloſe this letter.

Thurſday

Thursday night.

OUR dresses are very splendid;—Ellen's is a Spanish habit—mine a Turkish; but we are so near of a size, that I expect much amusement from the mistakes of Merioneth, who does not know which of the two dresses belongs to Ellen.

When we met at tea, they were very importunate for a knowledge of our characters.

We shall not inform you (said I); for we mean to exercise your sagacities.—

But what reward do you offer to the first gentleman who discovers you? said Lady Derwent.

Even the undivided honour of being my protector for the evening.

Now, Cupid, befriend me! (cried Merioneth)

rioneth) and grant I may be the happy mortal.

—Sir John advanced to Ellen—and, pulling her rudely towards him, vowed he ſhould know her, though diſguiſed like Hecate:—then imprinting a boiſterous kiſs on her delicate cheek, while ſhe in vain ſtruggled to get from him, he ſwore ſhe ſhould ſit on his knee for an hour, unleſs ſhe told him what colour her dreſs was.

It would be, ſir, (ſaid ſhe, with contemptuous ſcorn) a very ſevere puniſhment to me, after ſuch outrageous behaviour, to be obliged to ſtay an hour in your company, much more to ſit that time on your knee. I deſire you will looſe my hand.

I ſhall not (ſaid he) indeed; ſo you may as well be quiet.

He

He dragged her to a ſeat, ſat down, and pulled her on his knee.

Sir John, (ſaid ſhe) your inſolence is unbearable. I will not be treated ſo.

Won't you? (cried the unfeeling brute)—how the devil will you help yourſelf?

If Miſs Rutland cannot help herſelf, (ſaid Merioneth, advancing) her friends muſt aſſiſt her.

I ſaw he had with difficulty reſtrained himſelf from interfering before.

Permit me to releaſe you, ma'am.

Sha'n't give up my point—will know the colour of the gown—will by G—! and then you may go, if you will.—Stand off, my lord—ſtand off. Bet you three guineas to one, that ſhe tells me in five minutes.

I would do almoſt any thing to get from you, ſaid ſhe.

Tell us the colour.

Green (ſaid ſhe.)—Sir, are you ſatisfied?

Yes (ſaid he); I wiſh Merioneth had took my bet:—*knew'd* I ſhould bring you to.—

Albert took her hand, and led her to a ſeat.

The evening was wet—we could not walk; we therefore went to cards.

We formed two tables at whiſt.—I ſeated myſelf, and was followed by Ellen. Lord Merioneth followed her.

We yet want another, (ſaid I, looking round the room)—who comes?

I want a ſeat (ſaid Clifford); will you take me in?

Certainly, ſaid I.

He was in a moment at my ſide.—

Sir John leaned over Ellen's chair; Mrs. Maynard took a ſeat by me; and they betted on the game. At laſt they wrangled ſo about their wagers, that we could not proceed with the game.

What a ſtrange creature you are! (ſaid Merioneth to her) if I was Bateman, I ſhould abſolutely expect you would box me.—

Perhaps, (ſaid ſhe) if you are impertinent, I may begin with you.

Say you ſo? (ſaid he, jumping up) then it is time to think of ſelf-defence.—

In ſaying this, he got behind her and ſeized her hands. We adjourned to the ſupper-room—the elders were already there; and left Mrs. Maynard to ſtruggle for herſelf. They ſoon followed us. She railed herſelf out of

breath

breath at Marioneth, who declared he only acted for self-defence.

And now, having scribbled almost to the end of my paper, I must here think of taking my leave of you, till after the ball. And here let me thank you for your well-meant letter; I am sensible it was written with the warmest wishes for my happiness. I allow the justice of your arguments, though I cannot adopt the conclusion to which they lead. Whatever may be Miss Rutland's birth, I know not; yet this I know, that she is too good to be made unhappy; and that, if there were no other motives for my conduct, I would never be the means of making her so, is a determination, beyond the power of time to alter. But of one thing be certain, that were affluence or penury depending on my decision, I

could

could only act upon my present principles.

Yours, sincerely,

LAURA MARIONETH.

P. S. What are you doing with Danville?

LETTER IX.

Lady Laura to Miss Lumly.

The Priory, Wednesday, Aug. 14, 179—.

THE ball is over, Jane; and I suppose you are in expectation of receiving some particulars of the entertainment. I will endeavour to oblige you, and sketch a few of its most prominent features; but, unfortunately, in these amusements, there is so little variation, so much folly, and so little originality, that I scarcely know whether it is worth while to enter at all on the subject. You have been present at one, and can easily conceive what every other

other of the ſame claſs muſt conſiſt of.—But, on ſecond thoughts, which ſome ſay are beſt, I will preſerve this from the oblivion it might otherwiſe be conſigned to, by giving it a place in our correſpondence.

Splendour and liberality vied with each other in the decorations and refreſhments. The party were numerous and faſhionable. Company came from twenty miles round, and many of them are ſtill here. There were many characters attempted, but few ſupported. The earl, the counteſs, and aunt Merioneth wore dominos: Lord Merioneth, was an Apollo, Severn a mountebank Clifford a counſellor, Sir John a coachman, Mrs. Maynard in a fancy-dreſs, Julia a Yarico, Ellen a Spaniard, and myſelf a ſultana.

At ten o'clock the rooms were

crowded a visit of the family assembled, by appointment, in the breakfast parlour. I should have observed, that the elders were engaged among the company. Ellen and myself were first in the room. We were soon followed by Mrs. Maynard and Julia, and we were all masked.

Our beaux entered.—Do you know me?—I know you—passed for a few minutes, when Apollo struck his guitar, —and, taking the hand of Ellen, whom he feigned to mistake for me, exclaimed,—Thus then, inspired by Venus where to choose, I claim my cousin's promise.—

Have you (in a feigned voice) prayed for inspiration?

Most fervently, he replied.

Then know, son of Latona, that Venus has rejected your petition.

Impossible!

Impoſſible! (ſaid I) beſides, a divinity could not want inſpiration.—No, no; he has peeped behind our maſks, and knew where to chooſe.

Spare your raillery, ſweet couſin, (ſaid he) and condeſcend to enroll me among the number of your ſlaves.—

Thoſe that I encourage muſt be all free men—at leaſt wear no chains but mine. This I ſaid in a whiſper.—

Do not be too ſevere (he replied) or I may find a way to repay you.—

Piſh! (ſaid I)—Sure the god of harmony is not out of humour.—

Clifford advanced:—My heart, (ſaid he) charming ſultana, true as the needle to the pole, points here.

Take (ſaid I, preſenting my hand) the reward of your penetration:—for this evening, I depute you my protector.—

Would

"Would to heaven (drawing me a little way from the company) it were for life!—

Really, Jane, I believe I mentally ſaid, Amen! to his prayer.

Mrs. Maynard, who had during the above dialogue, been adjuſting her noſegay, and varying the effect of a feather, advanced towards us, ſaying,—Come, come, counſellor; there is none there likely to want your aſſiſtance:—you gentlemen of the robe ſhould always be doing ſomething in the way of buſineſs. Come along with me, and I'll engage to procure half a dozen briefs in leſs time than I won Sir John's wager.

How will you do that? cried Merioneth.—

Oh! I'll ſwear this brute (turning to the baronet) endeavoured to run away

away with me, bring an action againſt him for damages, and Counſellor Plauſible (patting Clifford on the ſhoulder) ſhall plead for me.—

I am ſo ſuperlatively happy, madam, (ſaid he) in having gained permiſſion to plead here, (bowing to me) that I have not leiſure to repay as I ought, your kind intentions in my favour.—

She turned away, without anſwering.

Sir John, rudely pulling me from Clifford, cried, Hands off—hands off, Mr. Lawyer—d'ye ſee this? holding up his whip.

I ſhould have obſerved, that I made a motion to Ellen, not to ſpeak, purpoſely for an opportunity of deceiving this part of the family. I was likewiſe ſilent.

D'ye ſee this? ſaid Sir John again, ſhaking

ſhaking the whip at Clifford, while he held me tight under the other arm.—

Mrs. Maynard laughed immoderately.

And what of your whip, ſir? ſaid Clifford, with contempt.—

What of it! (replied the other)—Why if you, or any body elſe, offers, d'ye ſee, to touch this here little filly, I ſhall reſent it, ſir; and, perhaps, you may feel the weight of this little friend of mine,—ſhaking the whip again.—

Sir John, (ſaid Clifford, unmaſking) I inſiſt on your relinquiſhing that lady. She has done me the honour to place herſelf under my protection; and I ſhould deſpiſe myſelf, if I could permit you to inſult her with impunity. Your ſchool-boy threats, ſir, are entirely loſt on me.—

The

The knight paused.

And pray, sir, (said Mrs. Maynard, tauntingly) who is the lady in whose cause you are so valourous a champion?—

Without the lady's permission, I certainly shall not say who she is, said Clifford.—

Merioneth came forward. I waved my hand: he understood me, and retreated.

It must be Miss Rutland; (said she) and I heard Lady Derwent authorise Sir John to seek her; so perhaps, sir, your gallantry may be exerted in a wrong cause.—

That cause, (said he) ma'am, can never be wrong, when the end to be obtained is the preservation of a lady from insolence. Sir, (with a resolute tone) will you release that lady?—

First (cried the wretch) let us ſee who ſhe is. Perhaps, I have ſtarted upon a wrong ſcent.—

In ſaying this, he raiſed his hand to my maſk. Clifford ruſhed between us, and forced him from me. The knight whiſtled; Mrs. Maynard ſtared; and I unmaſked.

The myſtery is explained, ſaid ſhe, and was turning to leave the room.—

Stop, ma'am, (cried Clifford) as you have witneſſed this gentleman's inſolence, it is neceſſary you ſhould likewiſe bear teſtimony to his apology.—

By no means, (ſaid I) Mr. Clifford. It is of no conſequence.—

You muſt pardon me, madam, for ſupporting a contrary opinion. Sir John, I deſire you will apologiſe to this lady.—

Well, (ſaid he) as it is a miſtake, I hope

hope your ladyſhip don't think I meant to affront you.—

I ſhall never think ſeriouſly, Sir John, of any abſurdity you commit; for in my mind, there is but one emotion you can excite.—

And what (ſaid Mrs. Maynard) may that emotion be?

Contempt, madam.—

I gave my hand to Clifford, and we left the room; they followed us to the company. The reſt of the family were already in the rooms. We frequently met—ſpoke—and ſeparated again. I declined dancing; Ellen did the ſame. We ſat together, making obſervations on the company. Merioneth was all attention. Clifford was the ſame. Mrs. Maynard had joined Lady Derwent. Severn and Julia were with Mrs. Me-

rioneth. Sir John ſullenly followed the Earl of Derwent.

Late in the evening, or rather early in the morning, the maſks began to diſperſe. We were, by accident, ſeparated from our party. I propoſed walking round the apartments in ſearch of them; when, paſſing a room, in which we had, in an early part of the evening, taken ſome refreſhment; I heard the ſoft voice of Ellen ſay—Indeed, there are none of our friends in theſe rooms. Pray, let us return to the company.

Not till you promiſe to meet me again to morrow, ſaid he.

I pauſed. My companion appeared equally inclined to hear the reſult of the conference.

Indeed, my lord, I cannot promiſe any ſuch thing.—

What

What, (ſaid he) my deareſt Ellen, prevents your compliance with this trifling requeſt?—

All the obligations I owe to Lady Derwent.—

And do you expreſs your gratitude to Lady Derwent, by torturing her ſon?—

Pray, Lord Merioneth, ſpare me on this diſtreſſing ſubject. Why will you propoſe ſuch viſionary ſchemes? You know my ſituation; you know——

I know it all, (interrupting her) and would fain make up to you the deficiencies of fortune.—

I cannot, indeed, my lord, I cannot profit by your generous intentions.—

Say, rather, you will not (ſaid he). Tell me, at leaſt, why I am cruelly ſhunned: why ſo unkindly neglected?—

You cannot, my lord, complain now of neglect.

It is ſo ſeldom (ſaid he) that I meet an opportunity like the preſent, that I cannot conſent to part with you, without ſome certainty of having it renewed.—

How ſtrange (ſhe replied) is this behaviour! and how ill does it agree with your lordſhip's known engagement to your couſin!—

It is all ſuppoſition (ſaid he). Why, my dear Ellen, will you not permit me to explain the ambiguity of my conduct; to clear every doubt? Would to heaven I could with as much eaſe remove every difficulty! May I hope your ſtudied reſerve proceeds from no other cauſe than the ideas which ſuch engagements naturally excite? May I preſume that you would, were there no

no impediments, acknowledge your devoted Merioneth the friend of your heart, and partner of your choice?—

My lord, (ſaid ſhe, with dignity) I am ſuperior to artifice, and have, therefore no heſitation in aſſuring you, that was my ſituation ſuch as could entitle me to expect the approbation of your family, it would be the firſt wiſh of my heart to approve myſelf worthy of your regard; but, as that cannot be, ſhall I meanly break in upon the views of Lord Derwent, and deſtroy the domeſtic peace of your worthy mother?—

My charming, faſcinating Ellen, promiſe me one calm, one uninterrupted hearing.—

To-morrow, my lord, I will endeavour to oblige you. Now then I claim your promiſe, of ſeeking our friends, as I feel myſelf ſuddenly ill.—

Sit

Sit down (ſaid he) only a few minutes, till you are recovered.—

She ſunk back in a chair to which he had conducted her, and appeared fainting. I then thought it was time to make my appearance: ſo, entering the room in a feigned ſurprize, I enquired the cauſe of Miſs Rutland's indiſpoſition.

I am interrupted.

Thurſday, Auguſt 15, 179—.

THE heat of the rooms, (replied Merioneth) and the fatigue of the crowd, were too much for Miſs Rutland. She permitted me to conduct her in ſearch of the family. I had juſt procured her a glaſs of lemonade; but ſhe fainted before it reached her mouth.—

Well,

Well, (ſaid I) open the window, and pull off her gloves:—you will never recover her, by gazing on her face.—

I ſhould have obſerved that ſhe was then without her maſk.

The application of Hungary-water ſoon reſtored her.

Where am I? ſaid ſhe, opening her fine blue eyes, and fixing them on Merioneth.—

Surrounded by friends, my ſweet girl, (ſaid I) who rejoice at your recovery; at leaſt I can anſwer for Mr. Clifford and myſelf; Lord Merioneth is in a very pretty attitude to make his own compliments.—

He was kneeling before her.

Do not be too ſevere, my gay couſin, (ſaid he) for I can ſee—

What (ſaid I) can you ſee?—

That

That all masks are not treated alike.—

They are not all impertinent alike, said I.—

No, (significantly) nor all agreeable alike.—

Now, Jane, was not this a most abominable sarcasm? I felt absolutely confused. I had taken off my mask too; and, to avoid the penetration of Merioneth, was turning to depart:—when, to increase my embarrassment, I met the eyes of Clifford, absolutely dancing with delight. He seized my hand; he pressed it to his heart. Pleasure beamed on his expressive face, as he exclaimed—My charming Laura, why this trepidation?

I think (said I) the air of this room is infectious: do let us leave it.—

I will go any where with you, said Clifford.—

Ellen

Ellen took my arm, and we again mixed with the company, who were then in the hurry of departure. So far it was favourable to us; for no notice was taken of our abſence.

Thus cloſed the entertainment: and I leave you to comment on the different events of it. Ellen has been indiſpoſed with a ſore-throat; ſo I believe Albert has not had his promiſed hearing. The houſe has been, ever ſince the maſquerade, one continual ſcene of confuſion, owing to many of the viſitors ſtaying here to recover their fatigue. I believe the laſt party goes this evening: they are friends of Mrs. Maynard, and ſhe accompanies them home. I do not regret her abſence, for ſhe is not one of my favourites. I ſhall, as ſoon as I can find leiſure to ſpeak on family-matters, get rid of the

farce

farce Merioneth and myself are acting; for, during Ellen's absence, he is never from my side. Clifford appears thoughtful and uneasy. Why don't the man speak?—He is going, I hear, in a fortnight, to quit the Priory.—Surely we shall not part without some explanation; and, after the unequivocal proof he heard of Albert's preference for another, he must certainly know that I can never consent to that alliance. Why then is he so stupidly silent?—I protest I have a great mind to think no more of him:—applaud my resolution, and write to me without delay.

Thursday,

Thurſday night.

WELL, Jane, it is over. Mercy on me! what an unmerciful lecture has your poor Laura been fated to bear!—but take it as it paſſed.

I left you, to take leave of Mrs. Maynard and her friends. Julia, too, is gone with them—and Ellen is ſtill confined to her chamber. After their departure, Merioneth requeſted my company for a walk. Mrs. Merioneth was preſent.

I am going (ſaid I) to finiſh a letter to Miſs Lumly.—

Do that to-morrow, ſaid my aunt.—

I had rather finiſh it to night, ſaid I.—

Then, my ſweet couſin, (taking my hand with an air of tenderneſs) you will not oblige me?—

I do not intend to walk this evening: I want to go and chat a little with poor Ellen: ſhe has nobody to comfort her, now Julia is gone.—

I will go to Miſs Rutland, ſaid aunt Merioneth.—

That is very good of you, my dear mama (a term you may recollect I frequently uſe when the good lady pleaſes me); and I will go finiſh my letter.—

Albert importuned; I rejected his ſolicitations: at length he feigned anger, and left the room. Then burſt the ſtorm.

Aunt Merioneth was prodigious angry:—I trifled, ſhe ſaid, with their hopes, and acted very wrong; very wrong indeed.

I, of courſe, contended that I had given no hopes: that I had uniformly

declared I would not receive the addreſſes of Merioneth; and, if trifling was to be imputed to either party, it belonged to them: for they madly perſiſted in a ſyſtem to which I had frequently declared my diſlike; and I now, once for all, requeſted that the ſubject might drop for ever.

Impoſſible! (ſhe cried) what will your uncle think of your conduct?—

It is very indifferent to me, madam, what he thinks of it: I have only to requeſt he may be informed of it.—

She made no anſwer, but left the room. I ſat down, took up a book, and endeavoured to read, but without effect.

A ſervant ſoon after informed me my company was requeſted in the library. On my entrance, I beheld the heads of our noble houſe all aſſembled

in council, intent, no doubt, on the important subject of transmitting uncontaminated to posterity the right honourable breed. On my entrance, the earl arose, and, with all possible dignity, conducted me to a seat. I saw displeasure lurking in his eye; but he is so much of the courtier, that he can easily repress the appearance of resentment: so, after a few hems, and a little relaxation of his muscles, he began to lament the fatal shock I had just given to the hopes of my friends, which his sister had, with great reluctance, been obliged to communicate.

I replied, I was sorry my friends should have placed their hopes on so precarious a foundation.

I never considered it, Lady Laura, as a precarious foundation, always taking it for granted that, in these cases, young

young ladies were governed by the better judgment of their friends; and, as there can be no reasonable objection made to the alliance; and as you have frequently declared that Albert is honoured with your good opinion; why will you not give him time to improve that sentiment to a tenderer interest?—at least, revoke the resolve of not receiving him as a lover; and, to oblige me, consider of the proposals I have to submit to your consideration.—

I have, my lord, (said I) well considered, and must positively decline the honour you propose to me.—

He paced the room: the ladies were silent. At last he cried, May I ask for your objection?

I was silent.

Perhaps you may think Albert in

this affair acting only by my commands; but I assure you, it is far otherwise; for my regard for your many excellencies is only exceeded by his admiration of them; and the first wish of my heart is, to concentrate our family by so desirable an union.

Truly sensible (said I) of your lordship's kindness, and grateful for the good intentions of my friends, I must again repeat, I cannot, in this case, profit by them. Lord Merioneth has too much merit to be second in any woman's heart, whom he honours with his choice; and mine has long acknowledged a predilection for another.—

I am answered: but why was the declaration not made before?—

It was never before necessary, my lord.—

And is it poſſible (turning to Mrs. Merioneth) that you, madam, were unacquainted with this circumſtance?—

This is the firſt time, my lord, I ever heard it named; and ſurpriſe almoſt prevents me from aſking Laura the motives of her ſecrecy; for ſure, you cannot (addreſſing herſelf to me) have made a choice which needs to be concealed.—

At preſent (riſing to retire) it is a ſubject you muſt excuſe me on.—

One thing, at leaſt, I have a right to aſk (ſaid the earl): are you under any actual engagements?—

No, upon my honour.—

Is the gentleman a man of family? aſked Mrs. Merioneth.—

Really, I never aſked.—

Is he a man of fortune? said the countess.—

Upon my honour, I do not know.—

Surely, Laura, (said aunt Merioneth) you are diverting yourself, at the expence of your friends.—

Indeed, madam, you wrong me, extremely! I was never more serious in my life.—

To convince me of it, name the man you honour with your approbation.—

There you must positively excuse me.—

I then attempted to escape, but without effect; for his lordship again attacked me; and I was violently importuned to name my favourite. At last, I was obliged to say, that, though I was grateful for their kindness, I could on no account admit their authority

rity to interfere with the independence of my own mind. My loved and lamented father (ſaid I) left me, my lord, uncontrolled miſtreſs of myſelf and fortune; and I will never reſign to any other perſon, a power he thought me worthy of poſſeſſing myſelf.

My lord bowed—hoped he had not offended—and begged I would conſider him as pleading for a jewel which was too valuable to be eaſily relinquiſhed.

I thanked him for his compliment; and the council broke up.

At ſupper, we were all mighty ſtately. The dejection of Merioneth, proceeding from the indiſpoſition of Ellen, paſſed with the family, I believe, for the effects of diſappointment. We retired early—and I took the opportunity of writing thus far.

I expect my aunt will now be for leaving the Priory; and, I muſt ſay, I have no wiſh to continue here. I ſhall therefore propoſe returning to Twickenham, and leave my noble uncle to recover his diſappointment; which he will ſoon do, if he can prevail on his ſon, to addreſs the next woman of good fortune who falls in his way.

I believe I have not told you, that the Dawſons have been told their ſervices were no longer neceſſary. They are gone to a houſe of their own, at Tiverton; ſo the laſt of the old domeſtics are now diſmiſſed. Oh, this uncle of mine is a great œconomiſt! his valet is to be ſteward.

I have wrote till my hand aches—and Morpheus claims his right. Adieu!

Friday

Friday noon.

MY aunt has anticipated my wiſhes of quitting the Priory. She ſummoned me this morning, to her dreſſing-room, and informed me, that ſhe thought, after what had paſſed, we could not, with any propriety, continue here.

I made no objection to her plan; and Lady Derwent is to be informed that we leave the Priory next week. I am inclined to think the good lady has a ſuſpicion of my *penchant* for Clifford, and that this is the true reaſon for her wiſhing to depart. Be that as it may, I ſhall very gladly leave this place. Clifford, however, goes next week: a circumſtance, I believe, my aunt is unacquainted with.

Miſs Rutland requeſts me to walk with

with her. It is the first day she has left her room since the ball. I know you will excuse me for laying down my pen, to attend her.

Friday night.

I HAD a very agreeable walk with Ellen, and a great deal of conversation on different subjects. She really possesses an excellent understanding. Merioneth joined us. Clifford and the baronet were gone for a ride—and Severn is quite *personne* since the departure of Julia. We walked till dinner.

All the elders as yet very stately, and very sorry to hear our intention of leaving the Priory so early in the season. My aunt answered, that she had

received

received letters from Twickenham, which it would be neceſſary for her to anſwer in perſon.

This ended the diſcourſe—when Lord Derwent condeſcended to obſerve that he expected to be in London, with his family, early in the next ſeaſon, and hoped we ſhould meet again at his houſe. My aunt flattered herſelf we ſhould always continue to meet with pleaſure.

After dinner, we adjourned to the drawing-room, and Merioneth read to us till tea. After that repaſt, a walk was propoſed; and we readily aſſented. A little twinge of the gout kept my uncle at home, and the two elder ladies ſtaid to accompany him.

We had ſcarce reached the garden, when Sir John (who was of our party) rudely ſeized Ellen, and ſwore ſhe ſhould

should run a race. She struggled, but in vain, to get from him. Clifford interfered.

Here is no mask now in the case (said the brute): I know I am right. I don't want to hurt her: a little race will do her good.

In vain she entreated him to free her: he continued forcibly to drag her along. Clifford advanced to rescue her; and, at the same time, Albert (who had been detained in the house) appeared. Indignation flushed in his manly face, when he beheld the agitation of Ellen.

Sir John! (said he, with firmness) in my presence, Miss Rutland shall not be insulted. I insist on your releasing her:—you must not intrude on her time.—

There! (said the brute, throwing her

her with violence from him) go to your champion.—Damme! what with one fighting ſpark or another, if one dares look at a woman in this place!—

So ſaying, he reeled off. Severn placed himſelf on one ſide Ellen, and Merioneth on the other; and by a ſudden turn in the walk, we loſt ſight of them. I mended my ſpeed to overtake them; which was obſerved by Clifford—who, looking earneſtly in my face, aſked me, if I ſhould deem him an intruder, if he endeavoured, for that evening, to monopolize my converſation?

No (ſaid I); that I ſhall never think you.—

Generous Laura! (ſaid he) Clifford will endeavour to deſerve ſuch condeſcending kindneſs. In my ardent wiſhes for your happineſs, every ſelfiſh idea

itself absorbed; every ambitious hope annihilated.—I trembled, yet hoped he would proceed; and, scarcely knowing what I did, I sat down on a bank, but was silent.

You are not angry, Lady Laura? No; that sweet smile tells me you are not. But will my fair friend forgive my presumption, if I venture to ask her—

What? said I.—

Whether, after your departure from this place, I am ever more likely to behold Lady Laura Merioneth?—

Really, I do not comprehend you.—

Not comprehend me, madam?—Good God!—Are you not going to leave this place?—Have you not rejected the addresses of Merioneth?—And are you not going to the happy partner

partner of your heart? And, perhaps, ſhortly this hand may be the envied property of ſome more favoured mortal.—

How ſtrangely you talk! (ſaid I.) It is true, I am not inclined to marry Merioneth; it is equally true, that we are going from hence; but it does not follow that I am going to the happy mortal you allude to.—

Is there then (ſaid he, with earneſtneſs) no accepted lover; no particular favourite?—

I did not ſay, that there may not be one higher in my eſtimation than all the reſt of his ſex; and yet it does not follow, that he is either a declared or an accepted lover.—Perhaps he may not even think of the preference he has obtained.—

Not know if he was favoured with your approbation! (ſaid he, co temptuouſly)

tuously). Can ſuch a man—one ſo inſenſible of his own happineſs, be worthy of your eſteem?—

Go! (ſaid I, ſmiling) you are too ſevere on him. How would your ſagacity diſcover a lady's ſentiments for you?—

Were ſhe (ſighing deeply) one I dared aſpire to (looking anxiouſly in my face), I would trace them in her charming countenance, and find them in her ſpeaking eyes.—In pity tell me, deareſt, loveliest of women! does Clifford know the envied object of your choice?—

I believe you do.—I ſpoke with heſitation.

Do I really know him?—Forgive my preſumption (ſinking on his knee before me):—might I hope that ſoftened look,—that animating bluſh,——

Will

I was ſilent.

Will you not ſpeak to me? (he continued)—I ſee I have offended you: only tell your devoted Clifford, that you will endeavour to forget his folly.—

I will tell you nothing, in that poſture, ſaid I, extending my hand.—He took it, and kiſſed it with fervour.

I aroſe. We had before been ſitting.—He ſprang from his ſupplicating poſture,—caught me to his heart,—called me his charming, his adorable Laura,—ſealed his pardon on my lips, and prevailed on me to ſit down again. And it was then, Jane, after a long and intereſting converſation, that I confeſſed (what doubtleſs Clifford had before diſcovered) that it was for his ſake only that I had rejected Merioneth. I cannot repeat half his acknowledg-

ments for, what he termed, my condescension.—

I have much to say to you (said he); but I am now too happy to enter into sober matter-of-fact conversation.—When may I hope for another opportunity of explaining to you my present situation, and future prospects?—I leave this place (he continued) in a few days, to enter on a new scene of action:—only tell me, you wish me success: say you are not indifferent to my concerns.

I satisfied his doubts on that head; received his thanks; and promised to walk with him to-morrow morning before breakfast.—Shortly after, our friends appeared: we joined them.—Merioneth looked inquisitive, and saucily hoped, Clifford had been good company.—

Tolerable

Tolerable (ſaid I).—I hope you have endeavoured to entertain Miſs Rutland.—

I never loſe ſight (ſaid he) of my wiſhes to entertain this lady (turning to Ellen); though, I fear, I frequently fail in the accompliſhment of thoſe wiſhes.

Ellen's looks contradicted his aſſertion; and he interpreted them to his own advantage, for he looked as if he could have ſaid a million of tender things.

We returned to the houſe all in good humour; and let me confeſs, that it was the happieſt evening I ever ſpent in my life. At ſupper, Clifford placed himſelf by me: he contended for the ſeat. Mrs. Merioneth looked diſpleaſed; and Lord Derwent ſurpriſed. I believe they begin to ſuſpect who is the hero of my heart.

Alas! Jane, if this charming fellow now, ſhould only be of city extraction, which, I think, is very probable, of courſe he will not be able to preſent a long liſt of right honourable anceſtors; muſt I, think you, in compliment to mine, whom, I am told, were ſo from time immemorial, reject the honeſt heart of a worthy man, who appears poſſeſſed of every qualification to inſure domeſtic happineſs, merely becauſe he cannot come clothed in a full ſuit of heraldry? I certainly ſhall not, unleſs they can, indeed, convince me, that pompous names, and high-ſounding titles, are ſufficient to cover innate depravity, mental imbecility, or corporeal deformity; thoſe infirmities of our natures which all ranks are alike expoſed to. Doubtleſs, among ſo numerous a body as our nobility, there are,

are, there muſt be, many who, by an honourable and moral conduct, add dignity to their rank, and reflect honour on their friends; but ſuch diſtinctions muſt be obtained by the rectitude of their own actions: they can never proceed from ſtately mauſoleums or ſculptured tombs.

We live in an age, when the inquiſitive and free-born mind, ſoaring beyong the reach of honorary diſtinctions, views man as man. Reaſon ſits arbitreſs on men and things; ſhe has removed the veil, which for ſo long a period, concealed the vices, the depravity, the errors of rank; ſhe has penetrated to the dark receſſes of the cloiſter; ſhe has diſcovered, under the ſaintly cowl, avarice, luſt, revenge; and has, from the hallowed altar, dragged the monſter Superſtition

forth to light: she has detected her fallacies, exposed her dogmas, and despised her threats; in short, she bids us freely exert that principle of enquiry which nature has implanted, more or less, in all hearts; she bids us divest mankind of imaginary distinctions, and view human nature as it is. Candour, indeed, will interpose, and teach us not to investigate too closely the frailties of humanity.—At her monition, I close the subject; but yet resolutely determined to think and act for myself.

I am come to the end of my paper —so good night.

Aug. 17th, Saturday morning, six o'clock.

I WONDER what Clifford can have to say to me.—Oh, there he goes!—

He

He turns to look for me.—You muſt excuſe me, Jane, for leaving you ſo abruptly: after breakfaſt, I will give you the particulars of our morning's converſation.

Eleven o'clock.

ON entering the garden, Clifford advanced to meet me.—He drew my hand through his arm, and led the way to the ſhrubbery.

I have requeſted (ſaid he) Lady Laura, this interview, to explain my ſituation: a few words will do it.—When I had firſt the honour of ſeeing your ladyſhip—

Hold! (ſaid I, interrupting him) not ſo much ladyſhip, if you value my favour,—

My charming Laura, then—

Aye, that is a great deal better: proceed with your ſubject.—

At that time (ſaid he) I was mourning the loſs of an amiable, a lamented parent.—There was a chaſm in my heart, which neither reflection nor amuſement could cloſe. I ſaw you, my ſweet Laura, your image filled up the mighty void, it became my divinity, and was interwoven with my exiſtence. This (continued he, taking a miniature from his boſom, and preſſing it to his lips) this has been my ſolace, my companion, and my friend.—

And pray (ſaid I) whoſe portrait is that?

Judge my ſurpriſe, when he preſented my own likeneſs, very well executed.

For Heaven's ſake, how came you by that?—

Oh, very innocently! Cupid aſſiſted me:—but do you recollect permitting Fanny to come to my cottage?—

Perfectly.

She had been there a few evenings before, without your knowledge. I found her a ſenſible girl, and aſked, as a particular favour, if ſhe could procure me, for an hour, a miniature of her lady. She pauſed a little while; but, at my renewing my requeſt, ſhe agreed to aſk leave to come one evening, before you left Malvern; and, if poſſible, to bring Mrs. Merioneth's bracelet, on which was your likeneſs. She performed her promiſe. I ſketched the features with ſucceſs. How could I fail, when the original was in

my

my heart? From Fanny I heard that you were inſtantly to leave Malvern. Ah! with what regret did I hear that! From her too, I learned alſo, that your refuſal of a notorious gameſter had been thought the ground-work of the inſult you received from the ruffian. I madly ruſhed into your preſence: you forgave me. You left Malvern, and I reſolved to follow you. I ſold my cottage, and once more returned to the buſy ſcenes of London.—I placed my old ſervant with a friend of my late mother, and ſpeedily proceeded to Twickenham, to make enquiries after my fair enſlaver. There I heard you were gone to Briſtol. I followed to that place, but without ſucceſs. I was there informed that the earl was gone to the continent, to drink the waters of Aix.—

It

It was a miſtake (ſaid I); for we never quitted the neighbourhood of Briſtol. Once, indeed, that my father might have the more frequent attendance of a phyſician he valued, we had lodgings at Bath, it muſt be at that period that you miſſed us. There was ſome talk of our going to Aix; but the ſituation of the continent prevented it from being carried into execution——

I travelled to Aix (he continued) without moleſtation, — but without ſucceſs. I had always a great deſire to viſit Italy, the ſeat of ancient grandeur and modern arts; and this was an inviting opportunity. I had hopes too that I might there find my Laura. I purſued my journey. At Florence it was my good fortune to meet with Merioneth: we travelled together. His ſtrong reſemblance to your miniature

made him dear to me. I once mentioned you to him; ſaid, I had heard you ſpoken of as a charming woman. —"I do not know (ſaid he); we have never met ſince we were children.—Laura was a fine girl; but I do not know what kind of a woman ſhe is." The diſcourſe dropped. Shortly after, diſpatches came, announcing your loſs, and his father's elevation to the title; and ſoon after, he returned home.—I continued ſome months longer in Italy. —Merioneth frequently wrote to me, and gave a very preſſing invitation to ſpend a ſummer here. I complied. My pleaſure and ſurpriſe at meeting you here were beyond deſcription; but they were ſoon changed into regret, when I found you were the deſtined wife of my friend.—Thanks to my generous Laura, that blow is averted!—

To oblige Merioneth (who has much importuned me on the ſubject) I have conſented to ſtand candidate at an election, ſhortly to come on at *****:—the earl is to ſupport my intereſt; he is likewiſe, at this time, ſoliciting an appointment for me in a civil department under government; and I flatter myſelf, that, if I am ſucceſsful in theſe undertakings, I may be ſanctioned by your approbation, and publicly aſpire to the honour of your hand.—My humble circumſtances (he continued) would now only meet their ſcorn; and how could I expect a woman, rich, young, beautiful, and well-born, to yield her hand to a man, whoſe whole fortune does not amount to three thouſand pounds,—who has no connections to make up the deficiencies of fortune, and whoſe only boaſt is—an honeſt heart?

He

He paused for my reply.

I told him, that I feared he would find an honest heart a very troublesome companion to the altar of greatness.—Fortune (said I) should not be named between us: our's is not a money-bargain.

My disinterested Laura (exclaimed he) I must court Fortune. I cannot meanly quarter myself on the property of another.

Our walk was long, and our conversation interesting. I have promised to receive his visits on our return to Twickenham; an event which I must prepare Mrs. Merioneth for. I expect a great deal of opposition; but they will not easily put Clifford out of my head.—He leaves this place on Monday, and sets out for London, by the desire of the earl.

When when we returned to the house,

houſe, we found the family preparing for breakfaſt. I entered alone. Clifford ſoon after followed; and, I believe, no one ſuſpected our morning ramble.

During breakfaſt, the earl received letters, which he read; and, giving them to Clifford, wiſhed him joy of an appointment to a good place, with a genteel ſalary. Clifford received them with proper acknowlegments; and they ſoon retired together.

I haſtened to communicate theſe particulars to you; but muſt now leave my pen to dreſs for dinner.

Saturday night.

CLIFFORD has left us: thoſe letters demanded his preſence in London. He

He followed me this afternoon to Jenkinſon's: Ellen was with me. He explained the reaſons for his ſudden departure; and we wiſhed him ſucceſs. — Our plan of correſpondence was ſettled before we returned to the houſe; and in the evening he departed.

On Tueſday we begin our journey. — Julia is returned, but without Mrs. Maynard: that high-ſpirited lady has taken wing for Brighton. I do not intend writing again till our return to Twickenham. The ſweet plaintive Ellen has promiſed me her correſpondence, and I expect much pleaſure from her letters.

I ſhall now conclude, and diſpatch this enormous packet. I hope you mean to write ſoon to

Your affectionate,

LAURA MERIONETH.

LET-

LETTER X.

Miſs Rutland to Lady Laura.

The Priory, Monday, Auguſt 26.

HONOURED by the offer of your ladyſhip's correſpondence, Ellen, doubtful of her abilities to pleaſe, fearfully aſſumes her pen.—Yet the well-known conſideration of Lady Laura, induces her to lay aſide her apprehenſions, and to aſſure her, that though ſhe deſpairs of being an entertaining, ſhe will at leaſt endeavour to be a punctual correſpondent.

Commiſſioned by Lady Derwent and the whole of this family, I preſent their united reſpects to your ladyſhip and

Mrs. Menioneth. How changed is our late cheerful ſociety!—We miſs you every where. Lord Severn is ſtill the ſhadow of Julia; but I hear of no propoſals made to the earl. Lady Derwent appears thoughtful and uneaſy; and I ſometimes think the equivocal conduct of Lord Severn may occaſion her diſquietude. The baronet is ſtill here; and I am ſorry to add that his boiſterous addreſſes to me ſeem favoured by the family. The earl is indiſpoſed with the gout, and, I think, more haughty than ever (forgive the remark, —you bid me write from my heart) and ſo jealous of every attention paid me, that I am miſerable in his preſence, and nothing but the dread of offending his excellent lady, detains me in his houſe. Julia, dear girl, is all ſhe dares be.

I am ſummoned to attend Lady Derwent, and muſt haſten to conclude my letter—entreating your ladyſhip to believe that you have not a more ſincere friend than

Your highly honoured
ELLEN RUTLAND.

P. S. Your penſioners at the cottages are all well, as are the Dawſons: we ſaw them yeſterday.

LETTER XI.

Lady Laura to Miss Rutland.

Twickenham, Sep. 3, 179—

THANK you, my sweet girl, for your agreeable favour. I flatter myself our correspondence will be happy and durable. To me your friendship is highly valuable; for I loved you from the first moment I saw you, and soon discovered what you so carefully endeavour to conceal.—Oh, Ellen! I know the lord of all your fondest hopes:—but have confidence in me;—I will never betray your secret.

So, you have great confidence in my consideration!

conſideration!—Did you ever diſcover any of my good qualities before I rejected Merioneth?—Ah, that conſcious bluſh!—Why, I ſee you at this very moment.—But a truce to raillery; I am ſeriouſly concerned at what you tell me of the knight.—For God's ſake, rigidly and reſolutely reject him; nor be tamely ſacrificed to a brute, to forward the ambitious projects of my plotting uncle, who cannot be blind to his ſon's partiality for you, or unacquainted with your claims on Lady Derwent.—I can adviſe no farther; but if you think me worthy of your confidence, I may, perhaps, think of ſome things which may be of ſervice to you.

I have accidently met with a clue to Severn's taciturnity.—I had ever ſuppoſed his fortune very good; but I am

informed, from undoubted authority, that it is far otherwise;—that long and expensive law-suits have greatly impaired the estate;—that the present lord came young into the society of a set who live by the experience of others, and suffered greatly. He prudently fled from the gay world, and is endeavouring, by the strictest economy, to repair his fortune. His partiality for Julia is very obvious; and I have no doubt but he will make proposals as soon as he can do it with consistency.

I am happy to inform you, that Mrs. Merioneth is quite recovered from the fatigue of her journey, as is

Your affectionate

LAURA MERIONETH.

P.S.

P. S. I am glad my poor folks are well.—Mr. Clifford called on us yesterday.—I pray, make proper compliments to the family.

LETTER XII.

Miss Rutland to Lady Laura.

The Priory, Sept. 10, 179—.

YOUR obliging favour, my valued Lady Laura, merits my warmest acknowledgments. Long before you rejected Merioneth, your many excellencies imprinted sentiments of respect on the heart of Ellen.—Your desire of my confidence is highly flattering; and I embrace it with pleasure.—Much, indeed, do I want an adviser; and often have I wished to relate the particulars I now inclose, but feared my temerity might offend you.

You will see my affinity to Lord Severn; a circumstance he is unacquaint-

ed

ed with, as Lord Derwent, on his arrival here, gave a general direction, that nothing concerning me ſhould ever be mentioned to him.—Perhaps it was intended to ſave me a mortification:—for, who knows but he might reject me, as the offspring of diſhonour?—Ah! how different is the conduct of Merioneth!—Ever kind and attentive, he values not the misfortune of my birth. Chance, this morning, brought him to Julia's dreſſing-room.—I was there waiting her approach.—She was not up.—He eagerly ſeized that moment to renew a ſubject he has often before repeated.—I had been weeping:—he would know what had occaſioned my uneaſineſs:—I was at laſt obliged to confeſs, that I was made uncomfortable by the behaviour of the baronet.

There

—There is (said he) my dear Ellen, but one way of ending all these ills.—Be mine, my love; give me a legal right to protect you,—and resign (with the name of Rutland) every recollection of unmerited mortification. Consent, my dear Ellen, to the ardent wishes of your devoted Albert; and let him bless the day which gives him unlimited permission to soften all your sorrows.—

Ah! (said I) Merioneth, for what would you bless that day? For uniting your fate to a woman disliked by your father,—for alienating you from your family, and destroying your fortune?

He replied, with an air of disappointment—If you loved me, Ellen, you would have less prudence.—

—It is affection, my dear Merioneth, which gives me foresight:—I tremble for

for the conſequences which might reſult from the union propoſed.—

I cannot (ſaid he) ſee ſo much danger as you apprehend.—My allowance is genteel; we muſt live frugal: our eſtabliſhment muſt accord with our circumſtances, till the earl can be prevailed on to enlarge my income.—

Ah, my lord, that is at beſt but an uncertainty; for myſelf, having no pretenſions to greatneſs, I have no wiſh for it. But your lordſhip, born in affluence, and educated in ſplendor,—what a change muſt you experience, ſhould the income you now poſſeſs be hereafter with-held!—In that caſe, who will venture to aſſure me, that Lord Merioneth will not execrate that day which bound his fate with mine?

He was offended at the ſuppoſition, and propoſed (would I give him a le-

gal

gal right to act for me) making inſtant application to my grandfather in my behalf, whoſe reſentment for the conduct of his daughter, he thought, muſt, by this time, be ſoftened into pity for her child.

I heſitated;—but let me proudly ſay, it was only the heſitation of a moment; and I replied, with all the compoſure I could command,—that however faſcinating his propoſals, I could on no account conſent to them; ſince they were incompatible with my obligations to Lady Derwent, and at variance with every principle of duty, every ſentiment of gratitude.

The immediate entrance of Julia prevented a reply. I haſtily retired, and found my boaſted heroiſm was in a moment fled.—From my window, I ſoon after ſaw Merioneth on the lawn,

pale

pale and agitated. I burſt into tears; and they relieved me. I even ſuffered myſelf to ſuppoſe, that Mr. Rutland could not ſee my diſintereſted Albert without rewarding him for his conduct.—He has it amply in his power (ſaid I):—he will receive us; and we ſhall yet be happy.—Julia entered, and rouſed me from my reverie.—I followed her to the breakfaſt room; and was greatly relieved to find that Merioneth breakfaſted with his father in the library.——I am interrupted.

Wedneſday night.

DURING breakfaſt, there was only her ladyſhip, Julia, and myſelf preſent. She deſired my attention to a ſub-

a ſubject of the utmoſt importance.—Almoſt gaſping for breath, I could only bow; and her ladyſhip proceeded.

You need not, my dear Ellen, be reminded, that I have ever regarded you as my own child:—I have been happy in aſſiſting to adorn the many graces nature has beſtowed on you; yet, with all your endowments, think me not ſevere in obſerving, that your unfortunate birth and confined fortune, are greatly diſadvantageous to your future proſpects.—I am not going to elucidate the cruelty or illiberality of thoſe ſarcaſms ſo frequently beſtowed on illegitimate birth; I will content myſelf with remarking, that however unjuſt ſuch prejudices may be thought, they are generally deep and laſting.

She pauſed.—I entreated ſhe would be explicit.

Fortunately

Fortunately for you, an offer now preſents itſelf, which nothing can juſtify you in refuſing; as it will be the only method of introducing you to Sir Felix; an object I have never loſt ſight of.—As the daughter of Lord Severn, he might reject all offers of accommodation; but, as the wife of Sir John Bateman, he will, no doubt, receive you.—What ſays my Ellen?—Shall I acquaint the earl, that you acquieſce in our united wiſhes, and introduce Sir John as your accepted lover?

No, madam (ſaid I, riſing from my ſeat) I cannot receive Sir John in the manner you propoſe; nor is it by bearing his name that I can make any application to Sir Felix, or repay the debt of gratitude I owe your ladyſhip.

You can in no other way repay it (retorted Lady Derwent); and, if you perſiſt

perſiſt in refuſing this advantageous offer, I ſhall be inclined to think your refuſal proceeds from miſplaced affection.

Ah! my friend, could I refute the charge?—It was impoſſible; for my rebel heart, even at that moment, told me, it could only beat for Albert.

I entreated her ladyſhip to acquaint Sir John, that I had declined his propoſals.

Hear him, at leaſt, Miſs Rutland; I inſiſt on it.—Offers like his ſhould not be idly ſported with.—

Nor meanly accepted, madam, when the heart is at variance with them.—

Nor ridiculouſly thrown away, (ſaid her ladyſhip) for ideal expectations which can never be gratified.—

Indeed, Lady Derwent, I cannot receive the offers of Sir John.—It is not

from

ſion ambitious hopes, or ideal expectations, that I reject them; but from an innate conviction that thoſe ſentiments which give permanence to married happineſs, can never, in this caſe, govern my conduct.

Mere ſubterfuge (ſaid ſhe); but I muſt inform Lord Derwent of your ſtrange behaviour.—However, take notice, Ellen, the point is not given up.

Saying this, ſhe was leaving the room, when ſhe was met at the door by Albert.—She pauſed a moment, and angrily demanded, why he was not preparing for his journey?—He replied, that he had every thing, he believed, in readineſs; and ſhould ſet out in a few hours.

Lady Derwent left the room.

Not having heard before of any intended journey, I dare ſay my looks

teſtified my ſurpriſe.—Julia was equally unacquainted with it.—

For Heaven's ſake! brother, where are you going, and how long ſhall you be abſent?

To your firſt queſtion (he anſwered) of where?—I am going to ****, to aſſiſt at Clifford's election.—

A very unneceſſary journey; for he is ſure of every vote in the place.—

But go, it ſeems, I muſt.—I am likewiſe commiſſioned to do buſineſs for my father in London; and of courſe ſhall take that opportunity of paying my reſpects to our friends at Twickenham. —I ſuppoſe I ſhall be abſent a fortnight.—

How long (ſaid ſhe) have you been appriſed of this journey?—

About three quarters of an hour:—but I do not commence my journey till

the

the evening, if I can help it. In the mean time, my ſweet Ellen, will you favour me with your company in the garden for half an hour?

I heſitated.

Julia (ſaid he) do you walk on with Miſs Rutland, and I will follow in a few minutes.—

Indeed (ſaid I) you muſt excuſe me; I am not well.

He looked diſpleaſed; but did not reply.

I haſtily retired here, and took up my pen. From my window I ſoon after ſaw them alone in the garden — From Julia he, doubtleſs, will learn the converſation which paſſed at breakfaſt.—Ah! Lady Laura, there needs no great penetration to diſcover why he is ordered to ****.

It draws near the hour of dining, and

I must prepare for my appearance; but first I will end this letter, that you may, as soon as possible, peruse the inclosed manuscript,—which I, after various entreaties, procured from Lady Derwent.

Continue to me, I beseech you, your friendship, and favour me, as frequently as possible, with your advice; for never was it more wanted than at this time, by

Your devoted

E. RUTLAND.

The Manuscript inclosed in the foregoing, addressed to Miss Rutland.

"AT your frequent and earnest solicitations, I commit to paper the following tale. Each circumstance is still fresh upon my memory; and never

ver but with life can I ceaſe to regret the ſorrows of Miſs Rutland.

"Your mother was my moſt intimate friend;—on my marriage, ſhe accompanied me home, and continued with me for fourteen months; in which time my ſon was born. Shortly after that event, ſhe was attacked by a nervous complaint, for which ſhe was ordered ſea-bathing. To reſtore her health, her father conveyed her to Brighton. I ſoon followed them. Mr. Merioneth was detained in London by particular buſineſs. Mr. Rutland ſoon after left us, and retired to his ſeat in Lancaſhire. Chance, at the ſame time, brought us acquainted with Lord Severn. He had lodgings in the ſame houſe. He frequented our parties, promoted our amuſements, and health again glowed on the cheek of Ellen.

Lord Severn was formed to conciliate the affections of the fair:—he was gay to an extreme; good without oſtentation; gallant without frivolity; and to theſe accompliſhments was added a handſome perſon, and an inſinuating addreſs:—ſuch, Ellen, was your father.

"To ſay, my friend was lovely, is ſpeaking but of half her worth. Her mind was the ſeat of every virtue under heaven; diſtreſs never appeared in vain to her humanity, nor ſuffering merit to her heart:—to the firſt ſhe would extend her purſe, to the ſecond her commiſeration.

"During our continuance at Brighton, Lord Severn avowed his ſentiments for Miſs Rutland, who received, with ſmiles, his offered heart.—Her father was applied to, who made no objection

objection to the alliance, only ſtipulated, that the marriage ſhould not take place until a law-ſuit was decided, on which, in part, depended the fortune of Severn.

"At the approach of winter, I returned to London, while Severn attended my friend to the ſeat of her father, in Lancaſhire, where he was received with great politeneſs.--Parliamentary buſineſs called Mr. Rutland to London. Lord Severn reluctantly took leave of Ellen, and departed for the ſame place, to hurry the lawyers, and thereby haſten his marriage.

"On his arrival in London, he found things not ſo favourable to his hopes as he had before expected. Vexed by the tedious prolixity of law, and mortified by the procraſtination of his fondeſt hopes, he determined, after a

few weeks' unavailing attendance in London, to return to the only perſon in the world that could tranquiliſe his heart. He had frequently ſeen Mr. Rutland, but did not name his intended journey to him; for he obſerved, with concern, that, after hearing the ſtate of his fortune, that gentleman viſibly relaxed in politeneſs to him. On the morning before he left London, by accident he met Mr. Rutland, who bluntly aſked him whether he was going out of town? He perceived by his looks, the inference which would be drawn from his anſwer, and evaſively replied, that he was going to viſit his mother in Kent.--They parted, and he haſtened to his drooping Ellen.

"It was late, in a dark evening, when he arrived at Rutland-houſe, unexpected by

by any of the family. He was ſhown up ſtairs.—Ellen was alone, and weeping over a letter ſhe had juſt before received from her father. Severn approached, clapſed her to his heart, and begged to ſhare her ſorrows. She could not anſwer a word, but (leaning on his ſhoulder) ſobbed in agony. After a little time, ſhe became more compoſed, and diſcourſed freely on the ſource of her anxiety.

"Read this (ſaid ſhe, preſenting the letter); you will there find that my father not only commands me to renounce you,—but to prepare my mind to receive a huſband of his recommendation; and the next week (ſhe added) will bring them both here.—

"My Ellen (ſaid he), prevent the miſery which threatens us.—You honour me with your approbation; you condeſcend

deſcend to intereſt yourſelf in my happineſs; you ſhed precious tears at the idea of a ſeparation; you are my all of earthly bliſs; the utmoſt malice of fortune cannot deprive me of a competence:—be mine, then, my love; be inſtantly mine, and put it beyond the power of caprice to ſeparate us forever.

"She liſtened, heſitated, but at length conſented. Yet her underſtanding was at variance with her reſolutions: but Severn, ardent in his purſuits, would not ſuffer her mind to dwell on melancholy preſages; he painted the anger of her father, at moſt, but of ſhort duration.—Beſides (ſaid he) my family and connections will effectually ſcreen you from the contempt of the world.—

"But they will not (ſaid ſhe) ſilence my own reflections.

"Again he pleaded, and again ſhe

appeared ſatisfied. A journey to Scotland was propoſed; my friend declared ſhe would not leave her father's houſe for ſo long a time as would neceſſarily be taken up in performing ſo long a journey.

"How elſe then (ſaid he) can we prevent the conſequences of Mr. Rutland's arrival?—

"Even when he does arrive (ſaid ſhe) that may be our laſt reſource.

"He was obliged to appear ſatisfied, and ſoon after took his leave. His horſes and ſervants were left at a neighbouring inn.

"Three days paſſed in unavailing debates on different plans, which were never adopted. On the third evening, as they were ſitting alone, a letter was delivered to Ellen. It was from her father. She opened it with trembling hands, and read as follows;—

"'To-

"'To-morrow evening I ſhall be with you accompanied by my friend, whom I command you to receive as your future huſband.'—

"Never (ſaid ſhe, with fervour) will I be any other than my Harry's wife.—Lord Severn, I am from this moment your's.—

"Then you conſent to our immediate journey? ſaid he.—

"Leave me, (ſaid ſhe) for the preſent; I will determine by the morning; and be here early.—

"He obeyed.

"She rang the bell for her ſervant, who had lived with her from infancy, and eaſed her heart by diſcloſing her ſituation.

"Mary could not adviſe: but ſhe wept with her miſtreſs. At length my friend (who could not bring her-

ſelf

ſelf voluntarily to quit her father's houſe) adopted a plan which ſatisfied her doubts, though it ended her exiſtence.

"Early in the morning, Severn again appeared. He was conducted to the breakfaſt-room. Ellen ſoon joined him. He eagerly aſked if he might prepare for their departure.

"No, was the anſwer he received.

"Good God!—you then determine to wait the arrival of Mr. Rutland, to receive the addreſſes of his friend?—

"You wrong me, Severn; and ſhould know me better.—

"She rang the bell. Mary appeared. Tell father John we wait for him.—

"[Your mother, Ellen, was of the Catholic faith.]

"The prieſt appeared.

"Now, my lord, (ſaid ſhe) are you ſatisfied?

satisfied?—and are you willing to receive my hand?

"Grateful for the gift (said he), in whatever manner bestowed, I here solemnly pledge myself never to forget the confidence you are about to repose in me.—

"The ceremony was performed.—He pressed her to his heart; and vowed never to forsake her.

"Before the aweful face of heaven (said she) I am your wife!—to your honour, my lord, I implicity trust for worldly forms.—

"And most religiously (said he) will I see those forms observed. In a few weeks, my love, I hope I shall publicly call you, Lady Severn.—

"Ellen sighed, but endeavoured to be cheerful.—In a few hours Severn took a tender leave of her, and again set out

for

for London. My friend was the idol of her father's ſervants: therefore, at her requeſt, Lord Severn's recent viſit to Rutland-houſe was ſunk in ſilence.

"In the evening Mr. Rutland arrived, bringing with him an elderly-looking man, whoſe appearance was not mended by a long reſidence in a torrid clime. Ellen ſhuddered at the ſight of him; but the certainty of never being his, in ſome meaſure gave her ſpirits to receive them with propriety.

"Some time paſſed without her father attempting to introduce him in any other way than as a friend; and ſhe began to hope that Mr. Monſon (that was his name) had changed his mind with reſpect to her.

"Severn privately returned, and had frequent interviews with her, unknown to any but Mary, who was preſent at

the

the ceremony of their marriage. His affairs called him again to the metropolis; and Ellen remained behind, tortured with anxiety.

"He ſoon wrote to her, in great ſpirits, ſaying it was time to acquaint Mr. Rutland of their ſituation. My mother (he added) is prepared to receive you. I will be down with you in a few days, when I intend explaining every thing to Mr. Rutland. I am unwilling to ſay any thing which ſhould diſtreſs you; but I am much afraid Mr. Rutland will remain inexorable, as I have frequently written to him, but can obtain no anſwers. Should he be deaf to our entreaties, I have provided againſt the worſt, by having the marriage-bans publiſhed in a church in London, where the ceremony muſt be again performed.

"[My

[My friend was under age.]

He concluded by saying!—This ſee, my love, though I would have you hope for the beſt, I am prepared for the worſt, and entreat you to prepare for your departure to London. My houſe is ready to receive you, and my mother is already here, to bid you welcome.'—

"Scarce had ſhe read his letter, which ſhe moiſtened with her tears, and conſigned to her boſom, when ſhe was ſummoned to attend her father.

"Ellen, (ſaid he) why am I tormented by Severn's applications?—You both know I have given that affair my decided negative. His fortune is deranged, his eſtate mortgaged, and I inſiſt on your giving no encouragement to his ſolicitations. You know (ſternly) I never change my opinion.—

"Forgive me, my father (cried Ellen, throwing herſelf before him); forgive me, for reminding you that you have changed your opinion; for you once thought Lord Severn worthy of encouragement. What has he done to alter your opinion of him?—His love for me does not depend on fortune;—he aſks not wealth.—

"How! (ſaid her father, interrupting her) have you been privately treating with him?—

"The crimſon tide mounted to her cheek. She could not aſſert a falſehood—ſo remained ſilent.

"Miſs Rutland, (ſaid her father, with more ſeverity than ſhe had ever known him ſpeak) I will not be trifled with: prepare to receive Mr. Monſon for your huſband, or renounce me as a father. Three days I give you to conſider

ſider of it; and let your anſwer be deciſive.—

"So ſaying, he left her to reflect on her ſituation. She hurried to her chamber, and re-peruſed her letter, ardently praying that her protector might arrive before the given period was expired.

"On the evening of the following day, he entered the drawing-room. Ellen was alone. At firſt her joy at ſeeing him deprived her of utterance. At length ſhe related to him what had paſſed on the preceding morning.

"Sweetly ſoothing was his behaviour. He entreated her to be calm. All will ſoon be accompliſhed: I will not for a moment delay an explanation with Mr. Rutland.

"Yet ſtay a moment, Harry (ſaid ſhe) only to promiſe me that you will bear

with the impetuosity of my father's temper. He will be greatly irritated, and his anger will be violent.—

"For your sake, my love (folding her in his arms) I will bear with every thing.—

"At this moment Mr. Rutland entered the room. His rage, like a torrent, bore down all before it. At last, exhausted by his own violence, he sunk on a seat. Lord Severn respectfully addressed him, while Ellen could only weep.

"I ask not wealth (said Severn):—keep Miss Rutland's fortune for her own use; and I will engage to make what other settlements you may require, as soon as my affairs are arranged.—

"Mr. Rutland again flew into invective. Severn vindicated himself with

with fervour. Mr. Rutland commanded him to leave his houſe inſtantly, and left the room in a rage.

"Riſe, my love (ſaid Severn to Ellen, who had ſunk in a chair); riſe, and prepare for your inſtant departure.—[But he ſpoke with difficulty, and looked wildly on her.]—I feel a tightneſs here (ſaid he, putting her hand to his forehead) and am ſuddenly ill. I rode hard in the rain.—But, come, let us inſtantly depart.—

"Impoſſible, my Harry, and you in this ſtate!—It ſtill rains dreadfully, and is very dark. Go, for this night, to my apartment. Mary is there: I will only ſtay to watch if my father returns here, and ſoon follow you.—

"Severn was too ill to make any reſiſtance—while Ellen, rouſed by a proſpect of his danger, forgot her own.

She diſpatched a note to his ſervant, ordering him to return to London with the horſes.

"She pleaded indiſpoſition; and, for two days, watched his wants, and wept over his ſufferings. He grew worſe. A violent fever brought on a delirium, and concealment became dangerous. Mary was diſpatched to a phyſician, in whom Ellen had great confidence; and he was requeſted to come in the morning, before Mr. Rutland was ſtirring. Mary told the family he came to her lady. From Mary, Mr. Wilkinſon heard the melancholy tale.

"I will fetch Mr. Rutland here (ſaid the good man). This ſcene would ſoften a heart of marble.—

"Severn ſoon after gave ſome ſigns of recollection. Mr. Wilkinſon haſtened to find Mr. Rutland, and they returned together.

Aſtoniſh-

"Aſtoniſhment and rage were pictured ſtrongly on the countenance of Mr. Rutland, while the ſcene before him for a time ſtopped his utterance.—Ellen regarded without emotion the entrance of her father: ſhe felt nothing but the danger of Severn, who recollected her father, and explained their ſituation.

"Procure (ſaid he) a ſpecial licence, that I may clear her fame, and legitimatiſe her child.—

"The ſcene that followed mocks deſcription. Mr. Rutland vented the moſt bitter imprecations on his wretched daughter, who was ſunk in agony by the ſide of her lord, inattentive to all but him. She knew nothing—heard nothing—felt nothing—but the groans of Severn. For him all aſſiſtance was in vain; he grew worſe and

worſe; and, raving on the name of Ellen, fixed his dying eyes on her pallid face, and breathed his laſt ſigh in her much-loved arms.

"In a ſtate of inſenſibility they conveyed her from the chamber; and, for ſeveral days, her life was deſpaired of. Sweet ſufferer!—ſhe was reſtored to all the bitterneſs of reflection. Mr. Rutland had never ſeen her ſince the death of Severn. He diſpatched a ſervant to London, to acquaint Lady Severn with her ſon's death, and to deſire the body might be inſtantly ſent for.

"Lady Severn, almoſt ſinking under the fatal ſhock, ſo unfeelingly communicated, had yet the tenderneſs and humanity to intereſt herſelf for the preſervation of my friend. A confidential ſervant of her own was ſent to Rutland-

houſe,

houſe, offering Miſs Rutland an aſylum with her, ſhould her father's anger render a change of abode neceſſary; and the remains of Severn were conveyed away during her inſenſibility. On her return to recollection, my friend ſent to entreat the preſence of her father.

"Tell her (ſaid he, in a determined tone) that we never meet again. She is no more my daughter. I have torn her from my heart. As ſoon as ſhe is able to travel, I expect her to leave this houſe. Tell her, I am inflexible; and every attempt to change my reſolution will only multiply my curſes on her guilty head.—

"My friend heard his reſolve,—with patience heard it:—at length ſhe exclaimed—Fate has done its worſt; and miſery has ſet her ſeal upon the heart of Ellen! We will go, Mary.—

I will

I will not call down his curſes: they need not multiply! for I already ſink beneath them.

"In the evening, Mr. Monſon requeſted permiſſion to ſee her. He was admitted. He came to ſay, ſhe might take her clothes, and even her diamonds: he gave her, likewiſe, from her father, a pocket-book, in which were notes to the value of two hundred pounds; and concluded by deſiring her not to irritate her father, by a fruitleſs oppoſition to his commands. My friend aſſured him it was not her intention; and he took his leave.

"She then wrote a farewel letter to her father, which ſhe requeſted might be given him after her departure; and the next day, attended by Mary, ſet out for London. They arrived ſafe; and the maternal kindneſs of Lady

Severn, ſoon, in ſome degree, reſtored the ſerenity of her gueſt.

" During theſe events, I was abſent on a tour to Scotland. On my arrival in London, I was informed, by a friend, of the fate of Lord Severn.—Mary had heard of my arrival, and came to requeſt I would come to her lady.

" I haſtened to her. Heavens! I ſhall never forget the effect her altered form had upon my heart.—Care ſat on her faded cheek,—and ſhe was but the ſhadow of my former friend. She was, however, compoſed, and related minutely the circumſtances I have been deſcribing. I ſaw her every day:—ſhe was grateful for my attention, and pleaſed with my ſociety; for to me ſhe could talk of Severn. She frequently expreſſed a wiſh that her father

ther would ſend her his forgiveneſs; and I determined to try if it could not be procured.

"Unknown to my friend, I ſet out for Lancaſhire, and, by travelling poſt, ſoon reached Rutland-Houſe. I was uſhered into the parlour:—Mr. Rutland was alone. He aroſe at my entrance, ſaying—To what ſtrange event, madam, am I to attribute this honour?

"To a deſire, ſir, of promoting your happineſs, by reconciling you to my friend.—

"Can Mrs. Merioneth plead the cauſe of infamy? ſaid he.—

"No, ſir!—the cauſe of humanity—of juſtice—of mercy—and Ellen!—Think of her ſituation!—think of her ſufferings!—It was the hand of heaven ſnatched him from her, who would

have gloried in being her friend, her protector, and her huſband.—

"Name not the villain (replied he, with indignation):—my eternal curſes light upon his memory.—

"Be pacified (ſaid I); nor load the memory of Severn with opprobrium: or, at leaſt, Mr. Rutland, condeſcend to inform me, if you have had no ſhare in bringing on the ſorrows of your daughter?—

"Was not his want of wealth a ſufficient reaſon for my conduct?—

"No, ſir; it aggravates your miſconduct—being the weakeſt reaſon you could poſſibly aſſign.—

"Mrs. Merioneth (ſaid he) all farther converſation on this ſubject is unneceſſary: my reſolution is unalterable. I will never ſee her more. Has ſhe not diſgraced my name?—ſullied the honour

nour of her family!—Do you think, madam, I could take a wanton to my heart?

"Is this the language of a father? (ſaid I)—For heaven's ſake, be not ſo raſh in your reſolves. See her but once more:—ſpeak peace to her woe-worn heart; and, by your forgiveneſs, reconcile her to herſelf. Mercy, Mr. Rutland, is doubly bleſt. It bleſſeth them that give and them that take. Extend then its influence to my ſuffering friend; and, by a deed of humanity, gild your own days with the ſunſhine of peace: for peace you can never know, if Ellen dies unpardoned.—

"Let her die!—let her periſh! (ſaid he)—for ſhe has made me wretched.—

"Again I attempted to plead—but his anger overpowered my efforts; and

and talking to him was fruitleſs. He paced the room a few minutes, and then abruptly left me.

"A ſtranger, of genteel appearance, ſoon after entered, and told me my carriage waited. I had ſat down, hoping Mr. Rutland would return.—I believe my looks teſtified my ſurprize, when he told me his name was Monſon. I did not anſwer him. He proceeded to make ſome impertinent remarks on my viſit,—profeſſed to pity Miſs Rutland; but, as if recollecting himſelf, he ſaid—Lady Severn, I mean: though I am ſorry for the lady's ſake, to ſay, that the marriage will not ſtand good in law.

"But, it will ſtand good (ſaid I) before that tribunal where iron-hearted cruelty and ſmooth-faced hypocriſy will be equally rejected.—

"I did

"I did not wait for his answer, but hurried to my carriage.

"As my application to Mr. Rutland was so little satisfactory, I never named it to my friend. On my return to London, I found her much altered.—From her settled grief and fragile constitution, I could hope but little. Lady Severn watched over her with unceasing attention; but we did not think she could survive the hour of trial, which was every moment expected. As her strength decreased, her intellects improved; and she would frequently converse calmly on her late sorrows.

"Weep not (she would say) over my expected departure. What can life be to one who has lost, except you, (looking affectionately on Lady Severn and myself) all ties to the world? My

My Henry is gone before me—my father diſowns me—my reputation is indelibly wounded—and my conſtitution broken by calamity. Alas! life has no charms for Ellen!—Should my unfortunate infant ſurvive, to your care I bequeath it. You (addreſſing us both) will be joint-guardians to its helpleſs years. Exert, I conjure you, your influence with my father for its advantage. Perhaps, when the grave incloſes Ellen, he may receive her child. Take (ſaid ſhe) theſe miniatures of its wretched parents (preſenting them to me). Ah! they were drawn when happy proſpects ſmiled,—before the blight of diſappointment had deſtroyed my fondeſt hopes.—

"The dreaded time arrived:—the event juſtified our fears. She lived but to preſs you to her heart, and invoke a bleſſing on your infant head;

then inſtantly ſank on her pillow, and expired without a groan. We diſpatched a meſſenger to Rutland-houſe, with letters on this melancholy occaſion; but Mr. Rutland did not condeſcend to anſwer them. The remains of my friend were depoſited by the ſide of Severn. Lady Severn retired into Kent, taking you and Mary with her. She frequently favoured me with letters filled with your praiſes. You were the delight of her heart, and the darling of her age.

"On the death of her ſon, the title had devolved to a diſtant branch of the family, entirely unknown to her ladyſhip. You muſt recollect the loſs you ſuſtained in her death; for you were at that period eight years old. At her earneſt requeſt, I made a journey into Kent, and arrived time enough to aſſure her that I would endeavour to ſup-

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ply her place, and guard, with tenderneſs, your inexperienced youth. She was made happy by theſe aſſurances; and, ſoon after, departed this frail exiſtence. Mary had before paid the debt of nature.

"Lady Severn's income was confined; but ſhe had, by ſtrict economy, reſerved two thouſand pounds. This, with your mother's jewels, and ſome valuables of her own, was placed in my hands. Her ſteward was left executor, and ſettled all her other affairs. I brought you home to my own children, and ſhortly after, you were placed with Julia, at M****.

"I have nothing more to relate, but that I have frequently written to Mr. Rutland, yet never obtained any anſwer. He is ſtill alive, and is thought immenſely rich. Should chance ever throw you in his way, your perſon muſt

muſt awaken his remorſe; for you appear the very being that twenty years ago was his daughter.

"I find, by my ſon's letters from Italy, that he has formed an acquaintance with the preſent Lord Severn. He ſpeaks highly of him, and talks of introducing him, at his return, to our acquaintance. Albert is a ſtranger to the particulars of your ſtory, ſo can make no diſcoveries; and ſhould he viſit us at the return of my ſon, I think it will be prudent to keep this little tale a ſecret from him; for there could be no advantage ariſing to you from his knowledge of your affinity to him; and it might, perhaps, be productive of much mortification to you."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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